Daughter of Discord

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Sequel to "Bride of Discord." Fluttershy and Discord are blessed with a daughter, one who knew immediately that she was different from other ponies, but also quite powerful, powerful enough to catch the attention of the Queen of the Changelings...as well as her son. Cover art by floppy-fluttercord.

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Daughter of Discord

- Introduction
- The Big News
- The Delivery
- Different
- First Day of School
- Insanity
- An Unusual Friend
- Lecturing
- Secret
- Caught
- Five Years Later
- To Canterlot
- Happiness and Drama at the Gala
- The Mysterious Stallion
- Fights
- A Lesson in Friendship
- Betrayal
- Misunderstanding
- Truth or Chaos?
- Love Will Find a Way
- We Are One
- Armageddon
- The Power of Love
- Ever After

The Big News

I'm not the best at sequels, but I loved writing Bride of Discord so much (you should read that first) that I wanted to continue the story. I doubt this will measure up to the first one, but I wanted to give it a stab.

Disclaimer: do not own My Little Pony, otherwise this stuff would become a reality.

The best part about waking up each morning was seeing her sleeping beside him. He stared lovingly at her tiny figure breathing delicately. He reached out his eagle claw to stroke her silky pink mane.

Had they really been married for three months already? It was hard enough for him to believe that they had gotten married in the first place, that after eons of loneliness, he had fallen in love with the most beautiful mare in the world, and she returned his love. Seeing her each morning reminded him that he had not dreamt it.

She stirred in her sleep and slowly rolled over to face him. Her adorable teal eyes fluttered open.

"Good morning," he whispered.

She looked up at him and smiled. "Good morning. What time is it?"

He checked the wiggly-handed clock on the wall. "Oh, about a quarter past nine."

"Oh, I should go feed the animals."

She flipped onto her back and attempted to rise, but he stopped her by pulling her closer to his body.

"I'm sure they can wait," he said lowly.

"Discord…"

"Alright, if you insist." He snapped his fingers. "Done! Now you have plenty of time!"

He tightened his grip on her. She shook her head.

"Discord, I'm going to have to get up eventually. I have to meet the girls at the spa this afternoon."

"Yes, but in the meantime…"

"Do we have to go through this every morning?"

"Can I help it if I want to spend as much time with you as possible? Can I help it if I love you?"

"No, I suppose not."

"Besides, you were rather sleepy last night. You deserve a break."

She sighed in defeat. "Alright, but just a little longer."

As he kissed his beloved wife, Discord concluded that life could not get better than this.

"So how's the married life, Fluttershy?" Rarity asked as the spa ladies placed two cucumbers over her eyes.

Pinkie Pie let out a cheerful cry as she did a cannonball into the herbal bath, landing in between Rainbow Dash and Fluttershy, splashing them both.

"Yeah!" the pink pony chimed, popping up from the water. "What's it like being the Lord of Chaos' wife?"

The yellow pegasus blushed. "It's wonderful. Things have been going great between us."

"So the romance hasn't faded yet?" Rainbow inquired.

"Oh, not at all! Discord makes every day memorable. Last night, he took me to see some fireflies. Oh, it was magnificent!"

"Aw, that's so sweet!" Pinkie Pie swooned.

"But seriously, you haven't grown tired of each other?" Rainbow pressed on.

"Rainbow, what a thing to say!" Twilight exclaimed while getting a hooficure. "Don't tell me you still don't approve of their marriage!"

"Oh no, it's not that. It's just that fifty percent of marriages don't work out and…"

Every pony stared at her in shock. The blue pegasus sighed.

"I'm sorry, Fluttershy. I'm just getting the wedding jitters. It's got nothing to do with you and Discord."

"You and Soarin havin' problems?" Applejack asked from the massage table.

"No, it's just…I've never given much thought to marriage before and what if Soarin and I aren't really meant for each other?"

"I thought you loved him," Fluttershy said.

"I do, but…what if I don't love him as much as I think I do?"

"I wouldn't worry about it, Rainbow Dash," Rarity said. "Every bride feels this way."

"How would you know? You never got married!"

"She's right, Dashie," Fluttershy assured her. "I felt the same way while I was engaged to Discord… *both* times. It's normal to be nervous."

"I guess you're right. What I'm interested in now is what's going on between AJ and Spike?"

"Well, uh…" Applejack stammered.

"They've been spending so much time together," Twilight interrupted, "Spike hardly spends two minutes on his chores."

"Sounds like you two are happy," Rarity sighed.

"We are," Applejack grinned. "How's Fancy Pants?"

"Oh, you know. Sometimes I wish he wasn't so formal all the time, but other than that, I think we're doing alright."

Pinkie Pie sighed dreamily. "I wish I had a special some pony like you guys."

"You'll find him someday, Pinkie," Applejack assured her. "You too, Twilight."

"I'm so busy with royal duties," the alicorn said, "I'm not sure I have the time."

Suddenly, Fluttershy grew very hungry. "Hey girls, can we get some lunch after this?"

Everyone agreed and as soon as their treatment was finished, the six friends went to the café. After the waiter had brought their food, Fluttershy made a surprising request:

"Do you have any whipped cream?"

He raised an eyebrow. She had ordered a plate of spaghetti and a glass of chocolate milk.

"We do, madam," he said, "but what do you want it for?"

"She probably wants it with her chocolate milk," Pinkie said, holding out her own glass. "Bring some for me too!"

The waiter shrugged and returned a few minutes later with a can of whipped cream. Fluttershy snatched it out of his hoof and squirted it all over her spaghetti. Every pony stared at her in confusion.

"Uh, Fluttershy?" Rainbow Dash said.

"Can you bring some hot sauce as well?" the yellow pegasus asked the waiter.

"Hot sauce?" he repeated. "Madam, I don't think…"

"Please?" she batted her eyes. "Some caramel sauce too?"

He sighed. "As you wish, madam."

"Fluttershy, are you okay?" Twilight inquired.

"I just have this craving for spaghetti, whipped cream, hot sauce and caramel," Fluttershy explained.

"But all at once?" Pinkie Pie asked. "Even *I* think that's a weird combination!"

"I'm telling you, that's what I'm hungry for."

"Madam," said the waiter, "here is your…"

"Thank you!"

She grabbed both bottles and splattered their contents onto her plate. Her friends cringed as she began stuffing the concoction down her throat.

"Fluttershy!" Rarity exclaimed. "Table manners, please!"

"What's the matter, Rarity?" Fluttershy snapped, her mouth filled with food. "Afraid to get dirty?"

"Fluttershy!"

The yellow pegasus shook her head, shocked at how she was behaving. Then she wiped her mouth with a blush.

"I'm sorry, girls. I don't know what came over me. I've been feeling strange today."

"No kidding," Rainbow said, staring at what was left of her recipe.

"So other than your peculiar appetite," Twilight said, "how else have

you been feeling strange?"

"Well," Fluttershy pondered. "When I got out of bed this morning, I had a terrible cramp and I almost fainted on my way over here."

"Have you been sleeping alright?"

"Yes. Actually, more than usual." She yawned. "For instance…"

She abruptly collapsed face down into her food. Applejack gently lifted her head.

"Fluttershy, wake up!"

Her eyes snapped open. "Huh?"

The cowgirl began wiping her face again. "You sure you've been sleeping enough?"

" *More* than enough. I fell asleep at six last night and woke up at nine this morning."

"Maybe you're overworked?"

"I don't see how. Discord's been feeding the animals every morning for five days straight. I'm anything *but* overworked."

She suddenly put one hoof to her mouth and the other on her stomach. "Oh my." Her cheeks puffed. "I don't feel so good."

Twilight summoned a bucket with her magic and handed it to Fluttershy just in time.

"Serves you right after eating that barf," Rainbow said.

"Maybe we should take you to the doctor," Twilight suggested. "We should see what this is all about."

Since he had fallen in love with Fluttershy, Discord had been using his magic for good deeds. Ponies from far and wide would come to him for help. He was now sitting on his throne listening to a stallion

from Hoofington. He had lost interest in the middle of his speech and let out a yawn. A sweet voice brought his attention back.

"Discord, I have exciting…" Fluttershy trailed off when she saw the visitor. "Oh, I did not know you had business. I suppose it can wait…"

"Nonsense!" the draconequus said, waving his paw. "Come over here, my dear."

Once she was at his side, he ran his finger under her chin. "I'll be with you in a moment." He turned back to the stallion. "So let me get this straight. Your village was attacked by parasprites."

"Yes," the stallion nodded.

"So what do you want me to do about it?"

"Discord," Fluttershy warned.

"It's a simple question," her husband said innocently.

"All our crops were devoured," the stallion explained, "and we have no food to last the winter!"

"So you want a bountiful harvest, I see."

"Yes!"

"What do you need me for then? You've got seeds, don't you?"

"Well, yes, but they won't grow in time."

He sighed. "Okay, okay. But it's going to cost ya."

Fluttershy crossed her hooves. "Discord!"

"Oh," the stallion uttered. "What's your price?"

"I want…"

The room turned dark and fire ignited behind Discord's throne.

"Your soul!" he hissed.

The stallion cowered in fear. Then the draconequus broke into laughter as the room returned to normal.

"Oh, that was priceless! You should see the look on your face!" He wiped a tear from his eye. "I'm kidding, okay?" He snapped his fingers. "Your village now has enough food to last through the winter, and halfway through spring."

"Oh, thank you!" the stallion said, backing toward the door. "Thank you, Lord Discord! We are eternally grateful!"

"Yeah, yeah. You can send me a gift basket if you want."

Once the door was shut, the draconequus snaked his arm around his wife.

"Now that we're alone…"

He pressed his lips against hers before she could say anything. She took a moment to kiss him back and then pulled away.

"Actually, honey, there's something I need to talk to you about."

He chuckled. "Why would you want to talk when there are so many more interesting things we could do?"

"It's important!"

He rolled his eyes. "Oh, alright. What is it you want to talk about, my angel?"

She laid her hoof on her tummy. "See, I went to the doctor's today…"

Discord gasped. "The doctor's?!" He touched her forehead. "Are you ill?! Is it serious?! How many months do you have left to live?!"

She laughed. "Discord, I'm not…"

"Whatever it is, I'll cure you!"

"But I'm not…"

"So what is it? Pneumonia? Cancer? Tuberculosis?"

"Pregnancy."

"Oh my gosh, it's worse than I thought!" He paused. "Wait. Run that by me again?"

She shook her head and then looked up at him with a bright smile.

"I'm having a baby."

Discord blinked. "What?"

"I'm due in ten months."

"B-but…you…me…us…baby?"

She nodded. "You're going to be a father."

He stared at her for a moment and then scooped her in his arms.

"Oh, honey, this is wonderful!"

Fluttershy laughed. "I knew you'd be excited!"

"Excited? I'm *thrilled* ! I was beginning to think it would be biologically impossible for us to have a baby! But then again, with me, *anything's* possible!"

As he hugged her, a horrifying thought occurred to him.

"What's it going to look like?"

Fluttershy shrugged. "Does it matter?"

"But…what if it looks like…me?"

"I don't care. I'll love our baby no matter what it looks like, and you will too."

He forced a smile as she embraced him again. *She's right* , he

thought. *Though here's hoping it takes after its mother.*

Actually, this is my first time writing about a pregnancy, not counting that mere mention of Cadence's in the previous story. To understand the whole SpikexApplejack relationship that has suddenly sprouted, read the one-shot The Discord Dating Game .

Let me know if I should continue with this.

The Delivery

Soarin and Rainbow's wedding was held at the Wonderbolts Academy on the runway. Twilight was performing the ceremony while the rest of the five were bridesmaids. Spike was the ring bearer again while Scootaloo, Apple Bloom and Sweetie Belle were flower girls for the third time in a row. Discord had to sit in the back row because he was so tall, which meant he had to be next to Celestia and Luna and far from his wife.

Why do I have to be here anyway? Discord thought. *I don't even know the groom, and Dashie doesn't even like me!*

He glanced at Fluttershy as she stood with her friends at the altar. She was three months pregnant now and starting to show. He worried that something was going to happen to her whenever they were apart, even if it was only by a few feet. She met his gaze and gave him an assuring smile, calming him down a little.

Then the music started up and every pony turned to see the three fillies hop down the runway, followed by Rainbow Dash. She wore a flowing, translucent multi-colored gown with a short train, a veil of the same colors hanging from a wreath of sparkling red wax grapes. Soarin's eyes widened as she drew closer. Spitfire stood at his side as his best mare, along with a couple other members of the Wonderbolts. They each wore their Wonderbolts jackets and ties.

Once Rainbow and Soarin had said their vows and their marriage was sealed with a kiss, every pony stomped their hooves and cheered. Discord rolled his eyes and clapped his hands with indifference. He was just excited that he could get back to his wife now.

At the reception, Discord and Fluttershy were met with Derpy, who appeared to have gained weight.

"I heard you two are having a baby!" she exclaimed. "That is so weird! I'm having a baby too!"

Fluttershy gasped. "Oh, how wonderful! But…who's…?"

"Wouldn't it be even weirder if our babies came at the same time? When are you due?"

"Eight months."

"Aw, mine's due in six. Bummer. Oh well, promise we'll get a play date?"

"That would be lovely."

"Great! I gotta go. I've got a muffin craving!"

As the gray pegasus left, Fluttershy looked up at Discord. "Speaking of cravings, I could really go for some cotton candy."

The draconequus zapped up a cone for her. She licked it contently.

"Funny how most of your cravings include chocolate milk and cotton candy."

"I guess it has to do with you being the father," Fluttershy giggled.

"By the way, what do you think it will be? A boy or a girl?"

"It's too early for the doctor to tell. Hey, can't you find out? After all, you were able to tell that Cadence's baby was going to be a girl."

"Oh yeah."

He used his x-ray vision to try and get a look, but something seemed to be preventing him from doing so.

"Ow!" he cried, his hands flying up to his eyes.

"What's wrong?" Fluttershy asked.

Once his vision had readjusted, he shook his head. "I guess the kid doesn't want me peeking."

"Can it have magical abilities even before it's born?"

"Don't look at me. I didn't have parents to teach me these things."

"Oh well," she shrugged. "Looks like we'll just have to be surprised."

As the newlyweds stepped into the pegasus drawn chariot, Rainbow Dash tossed her bouquet over her shoulder. All the single mares scrambled for it, but it landed in Spike's claws. Applejack was standing beside him at that moment. They both glanced away awkwardly.

"We're almost there!" Pinkie Pie chimed as she led Fluttershy and Discord towards Sugar Cube Corner.

Fluttershy was having trouble walking as she was now nine months pregnant and her belly was more swollen than it was supposed to be. She nearly fell forward to have her husband catch her.

"You sure you don't want me to carry you?"

She shook her head as she steadied herself. "No, I can handle it. Pinkie, what's this all about, anyway?"

"You'll see!" Pinkie snorted as she bounced up the bakery steps.

Fluttershy was about to follow her when Discord scooped her into his arms.

"Discord, I said…"

"But you can't walk up the steps! You might trip and hurt yourself and the baby!"

She sighed in surrender and let him carry her. As soon as they were inside, every pony jumped out of hiding and shouted:

"SURPRISE!"

Fluttershy gasped at the decorated room before her. Her five best friends as well as Spike and her three favorite fillies were there. On the wall was a banner reading: 'Congratulations!'

"What is…?"

"We threw you a baby shower!" Pinkie Pie squealed.

"But she showered this morning," Discord said confusingly.

The mares laughed.

"A baby shower is a party for expecting mothers," Twilight explained. "Her female friends organize it and bring gifts for the new baby."

Tears filled Fluttershy's eyes. "Girls, this is wonderful! Thank you so much!"

"Don't thank us yet!" Pinkie insisted. "You haven't opened your presents yet!"

She led her friend to the stack of presents and handed her one wrapped in pink.

"Open mine first!"

Fluttershy was about to sit down when Discord summoned a comfortable armchair beneath her. Pinkie placed the gift in her lap and Fluttershy began unwrapping it. She opened the box to reveal a yellow and orange hat with a green propeller. She took it out and looked at it questioningly.

"I saw it in the hat shop the other day and thought it would look cutesy wootsy on your baby!" Pinkie said excitedly.

Discord twirled the propeller. "It *is* kind of cute."

"Thank you, Pinkie," Fluttershy smiled. "I'm sure our child will love it."

"Now for my gift," Rarity said, handing her a box in purple wrapping.

Inside were six sets of foal-sized foot pajamas in red, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple.

"I didn't know whether it was going to be a boy or a girl," the unicorn

explained, "so I made one in each color of the rainbow! Well, I *hope* it's going to be pony shaped." She darted her eyes at Discord.

"What?" the draconequus shrugged.

"When the baby arrives, I can make a whole new set with proper measurements."

"They're beautiful, Rarity," Fluttershy said.

She opened Twilight's present next: an illustrated book on fairytales to read to the child. Then Rainbow Dash gave her a rainbow colored rattle, which she explained had been hers as a foal.

"But don't you want to keep this for your baby?" Fluttershy inquired.

They had received the news last week that Rainbow was expecting as well.

"Discord didn't tell you? I'm having twins! I can't have them fighting over one rattle."

"Wait!" Pinkie cried. "You're having *two* foals?! Which one's going to be my godchild?"

Rainbow laughed. "We'll figure that out later."

Next was Applejack's present: a baby bonnet with apples embroidered along the edge.

"It was mine," she explained, "and Apple Bloom's. I figured you should have it."

"Ooh!" Apple Bloom cried. "Can I go next?"

Her wish was granted and the filly gave her a small quilt. It was checkered in brown and yellow. Each yellow square was decorated with a pink butterfly matching Fluttershy's cutie mark and each brown square had a black and white spiral in the center.

"I made it myself!" Apple Bloom said proudly. "I incorporated both the parents' personalities into it, so that your baby may always be

reminded how special she is!"

"Apple Bloom," Fluttershy uttered, "this is beautiful!"

She slid out of her seat and gave the filly a hug. The dragon then stepped forth with his gift.

"I had to ask Twilight's permission for this first," he said.

In the box was an old stuffed green dragon.

"This is Sir Fangs-a-lot," Spike explained. "Twilight gave him to me after she took me home, but I've kind of grown out of it. I'm sure Discord Junior will like it!"

"I have a toy for the baby too!" Scootaloo announced. She brought out a tiny red scooter with a yellow bow on it. "This was my first scooter, but I've gotten too big for it now."

"And I have a record of my favorite lullabies!" Sweetie Belle said, holding up said record.

"Oh, thank you, everyone!" Fluttershy exclaimed. "These are all such wonderful presents!"

"We're not done," Applejack declared. "We *all* pitched in on this one."

Pinkie Pie bounced upstairs, followed by the cowgirl. The returned with a wooden crib painted blue and decorated with pink roses on the side. The cushion was feathered and the laced pillow was made of silk. Fluttershy was about to cry.

"You are all such wonderful friends and I know our baby is going to have the best aunts, and uncle, in the world!"

They all moved into a group hug when suddenly, Fluttershy felt a sharp pain in her belly. She let out a cry and clutched her stomach. Her friends backed away as Discord flew to her side.

"Honey, what's wrong?!" he pleaded.

"The baby," she wheezed. "I think it's coming!"

"Now?! But it's too early!"

"Tell that to the baby!"

"But it's only been nine months!" Rarity exclaimed.

"Doesn't matter," Twilight said. "We need to get her to the hospital."

Discord did not waste a second to teleport her out of there, leaving the eight ponies and dragon alone.

"Guess we're walking," Spike said with a shrug.

The hospital staff was caught by surprise when Discord came barging into the emergency room, pushing Fluttershy on a stretcher.

"The baby's coming, the baby's coming!" he screamed frantically.

"What?" Dr. Stable uttered. "The baby's not due for another two months!"

"Well, it's impatient! It *is* my kid, after all!"

The doctor was still skeptical, but it was clear that something was wrong with the mother and led the couple to the maternity ward. On the way, they passed by Derpy.

"Fluttershy!" she exclaimed. "I thought you weren't due for another two months!"

Fluttershy's breathing staggered. "So did I, but the baby had other plans!"

"Sweet! Our kids are going to have the same birthday!"

Derpy's stretcher steered away while Fluttershy's entered another room.

"I'll need to get an x-ray…" Dr. Stable said.

Discord summoned up the device and hung it over his wife's stomach. The doctor examined it with wide eyes.

"It's impossible, but the baby looks like it's ready to come out."

"Then what are you waiting for?" the draconequus demanded. "You're the doctor! Help my wife!"

Dr. Stable called for Nurses Sweetheart and Coldheart. They put on their scrubs and masks and got the patient into position. Discord had summoned up a mask as well and tightly held his wife's hoof.

"It's okay, honey!" he assured her. "I've got you!"

"Just breathe, ma'am," Nurse Coldheart said. "You're doing great."

"Oh, I see it!" Nurse Sweetheart declared. "Keep pushing!"

Fluttershy let out a cry that could be heard all the way from Canterlot.

The five ponies, three fillies and dragon paced around the waiting room. They stiffened when they heard Fluttershy's scream.

"What are they doing to her?!" Pinkie Pie squealed.

"If it hurts that much for one baby," Rainbow Dash clutched her stomach, "I can't imagine what it's going to be like for me!"

"I'm sure she's fine," Twilight said calmly.

When Dr. Stable entered the room, the alicorn jumped out of her seat.

"Is she still alive?!" she asked frantically.

The doctor laughed. "Fluttershy has successfully given birth to a healthy baby girl and is going to be fine."

Every pony gasped.

"A girl?" Pinkie repeated. "This is fantastic!"

"Wait," Rarity said. "What does it look like?"

Fluttershy gazed down lovingly at the foal as she cradled it in her hooves. "Isn't she beautiful?"

Discord scratched his head. "It looks so…normal."

The infant was an earth pony with a pink coat, a curl of purple and white hair on her head.

"Isn't that what you wanted?" Fluttershy asked. "You said you didn't want our child to be judged by her looks like you were."

"Yeah, but…how do I know it's *my* baby?"

The pegasus was appalled. "Discord!"

"I didn't mean it like *that* ! Maybe they gave us the wrong one? I mean look at it: no snake tail, no antlers, it doesn't even have wings! We both have wings, so shouldn't she have wings? It doesn't make sense!"

"I thought with you, nothing made sense."

"Well, yes, but there's nothing unusual about her!"

The baby's eyes then fluttered open, revealing them to have purple spirals for pupils.

"I'd say it's yours," Fluttershy said, cuddling her daughter. "Welcome to the world, little one."

"Maybe it's that Derpy's," Discord insisted.

"Discord, stop it! This is *your* daughter and she did *not* get switched!"

"I'm sorry, but it doesn't look like you or me!"

"My mother had a purple mane and my grandfather was an earth pony."

"Still, I need some proof that this is my…"

He trailed off as the baby started crying.

"Now look what you've done!" Fluttershy snapped. She looked sympathetically at the foal. "Aw, I think she's hungry."

She gasped as a bottle of chocolate milk appeared between them. The baby giggled in delight as it floated down to her. She took it in her hooves and sucked contently on the nipple.

"Discord, she shouldn't be drinking that stuff," Fluttershy said, trying to tug the bottle away, only for the foal to get a tight grip on it.

"I didn't give her that," the draconequus said, holding out his hands. "I swear."

"Then…how?"

She glanced down at the baby as the bottle slowly disappeared from her hooves. She then threw the chocolate milk away, creating a small explosion. A wide smile spread across Discord's face.

"It's mine alright!" He bent down and tickled the infant. "Cootchie-cootchie-coo!" The baby let out a laugh as she attempted to squirm away from the delightful torture. "Aw, look at her! Isn't she just an adorable little screwball?" His face lit up. "That's it! We'll call her Screwball!"

Fluttershy raised an eyebrow. "Screwball? Wouldn't that be labeling our baby as…crazy?"

"Need I remind you of my name?"

"Point taken." She smiled at the laughing foal. "Screwball, it is."

"Which one is it?!" Pinkie demanded, eagerly pressing her face

against the window of the nursery.

"The one in the middle," Nurse Sweetheart said, pointing.

The ponies turned their attention to the pink foal sucking on her hoof.

"It's…" Rainbow speculated, "…normal."

It then opened its swirly eyes.

"Never mind."

Every pony jumped as Discord appeared behind them. "I know, isn't she precious? We named her Screwball!"

"How lovely," Rarity grumbled.

"Aw, she's so cute!" Pinkie squeaked.

"We had another arrival within the hour," Nurse Sweetheart explained, "from a Miss Ditzy Doo. Maybe you know her?"

"You mean Derpy?" Rainbow asked. "Where's hers?"

The nurse pointed to the cradle beside Screwball's. Lying inside was a gray unicorn with blonde hair. Her eyes were looking in opposite directions.

"That's Derpy's alright," the pegasus confirmed. "What's its name?"

"She called her Dinky," the nurse replied. "Dinky Doo."

Screwball stared in wonder at the large ponies looking at her. She thought they were quite funny, especially the pink one. She then imagined what it would be like to tug on that poofy hair.

She turned her head as the baby in the crib next to her started crying. She could tell this pony was different from the others because of her eyes, and immediately liked her because of it. She wanted her to stop crying and a pacifier suddenly appeared in the unicorn's mouth. The ponies saw this and gasped.

"Did I mention that she has my powers?" Discord said in awe. "Oh, she's going to be such a troublemaker one day!" He clasped his hands together. "She's gonna make her daddy proud!"

"A baby with Discord's powers?" Spike uttered.

"Oh boy," Twilight mumbled.

While I could have created my own OC, since I saw "Daddy Discord," I've been interested in Screwball's character and also wondered what it would be like if Fluttershy was the mother. I know Screwball and Dinky were spotted in the background numerous times on the show and Dinky doesn't have derped eyes like her mother, but hey, this is AU. Anything can happen!

Different

Most of this story is going to focus on Screwball and the next few chapters are going to be jumps through her life. Thanks to those who have reviewed so far!

There was no doubt about it. Screwball proved to be a difficult baby.

A unicorn or a pegasus filly would have been easier, despite their magical surges and eagerness to fly. The daughter of pure chaos had that and more.

While her magic satisfied her hunger, a task that the parents were relieved of, the infant did not fully understand the capability of her powers. A single thought from her simple mind would cause something extraordinary to happen. One day, Fluttershy had the misfortune to come into the nursery and find her child gnawing on the bars of her crib, which had been turned to licorice.

Discord would never forget the night he made the most shocking discovery. A month after bringing their filly home, the couple woke in the middle of the night hearing her wails.

"Your turn," Fluttershy said wearily.

With a groan, Discord teleported to the nursery and gasped when he saw the crib empty.

"Screwy?!" he called desperately, using his nickname for her. "Screwy, where…?"

He heard a sinister laugh and looked up to see Screwball floating (*floating!*) above his head.

"Oh heck," he mumbled.

He should have guessed this would happen. He jumped up and

swung his arms at her, oh, but she was as stubborn as her father and easily dodged him.

"Get down here, young lady!" he demanded.

Then he jumped so high that his head crashed into the ceiling, his antler and horn leaving him stuck. Screwball snickered, but gasped when she saw the angry look on her father's face. She took that as her cue to flee.

"Oh, so *that's* how you want to play it, huh? Come back here!"

He flapped his wings furiously as he chased her around the room. For an infant, she was quite fast and sneaky. She flew beneath the crib and he collided into its side, thanks to his horn and antler, once again. He chose to go around and finally got a grip on her.

"Gotcha, you little scamper!" Discord shouted triumphantly.

The filly tried to struggle out of his grasp, but her father's hands were too strong. At last, she gave up with a pout. He laughed as he stood and held her up.

"Now to get you back to bed so your Daddy and Mommy can get some sleep," he cooed.

Then he took a sniff of the air and cringed. Screwball snickered again.

"But first, some pony needs a change." He sighed. "Ugh, I hate this part!"

He snapped his fingers and the filly's dirty diaper disappeared, a clean diaper replacing it.

"Who knew raising a foal would be so much work?"

He grunted as he set her down into her crib. She crossed her hooves and glared at him with her spiral eyes. He began to wonder if she had inherited her mother's Stare.

"Don't give me that look, little missy!" he ordered, pointing his finger

at her. "You may have chaotic power at your disposal, but *I'm* the Lord of Chaos and *I* make the rules around here, got it? Playtime is over! Now get to sleep before I *make* you sleep!"

The filly suddenly broke into tears, causing Discord to freeze. That had been louder than he had intended.

"Please, please don't cry!"

She opened her mouth and wailed at full volume. It was not that he hated his daughter or vice versa, but when it came to her crying, he was helpless. He did not have the ability to calm down any living creature like Fluttershy. So far, she had been the only one to handle situations like this.

"Please!" he begged. "You'll wake your mother!"

He had to get her to quiet down and go to sleep. He had tried a sleep spell on her ages ago, but the filly had developed a resistance to most of his magic, he had discovered. A trait she had received from her mother, no doubt. He considered fetching his wife to take over from here, but he did not want to rouse her from bed. She had been working harder than ever this past month, taking care of the baby along with her pets.

Discord decided he at least had to try to calm his daughter down. First, he considered what was making her cry. He had already changed her diaper and she clearly was not hungry, because she could handle that herself. He considered getting a laugh instead of a cry.

"Hey, Screwy!" he exclaimed. "Watch this!"

In a flash, he was on top a unicycle juggling a pie, a boot and an anvil. Screwball stopped crying and watched this act with curiosity. The objects then slipped out of her father's hands and landed on his head: first the boot, then the pie, then the anvil.

"Ta-da!"

She blinked for a moment and then cried again.

"Sheesh," he muttered. "Tough crowd." He knelt to her bedside. "For goodness sake, what do you want from me, kid?!"

His outburst did not make it any better. He slapped himself in the face. What would Fluttershy do in this predicament? In the time that he had known her, he still had trouble being gentle with other creatures. He thought the problem was that others were too absorbed with his appearance to give him a chance, but then he realized that the problem might be him not giving *them* a chance, or rather kindness a chance.

Maybe he should give it a chance now. He thought about what Fluttershy would use to calm the baby down and then snapped his fingers.

"A lullaby! Is that what you want?"

The filly seemed to understand him for she stopped wailing for a bit and held out her hooves with a whimper, indicating that she wanted him to hold her as well. He carefully scooped her in his arms. She was so tiny and soft. He would not be surprised if she grew up to be as beautiful as her mother. Thank the heavens she had inherited that part of her.

He cradled her gently and attempted to sing the lullaby Fluttershy would always use:

" *Hush now, quiet now*

It's time to lay your sleepy head.

Hush now, quiet now

It's time to go to bed… "

He trailed off as she began crying again. He rolled his eyes.

"Everyone's a critic."

Unfortunately, he was not as gifted in singing as his wife was, mostly because he had not had much practice. Besides, the song was not in his key. Maybe he should try another song, but he did not know

that many. Perhaps he should make one up. The first line he sung came straight from his thoughts:

" *Please do not cry, my dear*

Your Daddy is so very here… "

She paused a moment to listen to the haunting tune. Discord glanced down and saw that his cheesy song was working, so he continued:

" *And if any pony*

Causes you any harm or fear… "

He thought about what he would do if anything happened to his daughter.

" *Then I will bring them pain*

And drown them all in chocolate rain

' *Cause I…am your daddy, Discord*

And you…are a piece of me. "

The filly giggled in delight, clearly enjoying the song. She clapped her tiny hooves for more. Discord smiled down at her.

" *Oh simple spawn of mine*

Without you, I would be so lost

I will stick by your side

No matter what the tragic cost

Our crazed imagined thoughts

Are what give you and me our strength

' *Cause you…are my daughter, Screwball*

And you're…gonna sleep right now. "

The lullaby took its effect as Screwball let out a yawn and closed her eyes. He gazed in awe as she innocently sucked her hoof. He would have given her a pacifier, but he knew it was useless, considering she had eaten the last three. So he laid her in her crib, careful not to wake her. He picked up her stuffed dragon Sir Fangs-a-lot and slid it under her free foreleg. He then gently tugged the quilt Apple Bloom had made over her small body.

Smiling, he leaned forward and lightly kissed the filly on the forehead. Perhaps he was not such a bad father after all.

When he teleported back into bed, he announced to his wife, "Our baby can fly."

Fluttershy sighed, still half asleep. "Of course, she can."

Despite the complications, Discord and Fluttershy loved their newborn filly. She had a contagious laugh that was a combination of joy and sneakiness, much like her father's. Her powers, while making her difficult to deal with, were actually quite entertaining. Once she had learned to teleport, she and Discord took the game of peek-a-boo to new heights. She would often get restless, but Fluttershy was able to calm her down with her tenderness. When that did not work, she would use the Stare on her. Discord was grateful that the filly had not inherited his immunity.

The biggest issue was finding a babysitter. While Pinkie was the most eager, not even she could handle the filly's unpredictability. Rainbow Dash had to rest up for her delivery, Twilight was too busy on her studies and Rarity was too occupied with her store. Apple Bloom, Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo had tried, but not even three normal ponies could control this powerful, ecstatic infant.

Applejack proved to be the best babysitter, with the assistance of Spike. As she had to raise Apple Bloom from infancy, she had the most experience, though her sister could not do magic. Even though it was a pain searching for her whenever she disappeared, she

would not lose her patience and actually found ways to calm the filly down. The cowgirl considered her quite adorable.

"I wish we had one," she had once said while cradling her.

She had forgotten that Spike had been standing right next to her. "What?"

Screwball was excited about her powers, not realizing how unusual it was for a filly like her, and she got the most excited whenever Dinky was over. As Fluttershy had promised, she and Derpy would bring their daughters together for play dates. Screwball so adored her little playmate and was fascinated with her funny yellow eyes. She would stare at them for ages and wonder what the unicorn was looking at with one eye or the other.

She would amuse her playmate with her powers, making their toys levitate and circle in the air. Dinky would clap her hooves in pleasure. The only magical surges the unicorn had had were when her pacifier, the same one Screwball had given her when they met in the hospital, was out of reach.

When Rainbow Dash's twins arrived, Screwball was given two additional playmates. They were fraternal twins, a boy named Thunder Dash and a girl named Lightning Dash. They both had their father's light blue coats and their mother's violet eyes. Thunder's mane was streaked with blue, black and purple, while Lightning's was red, orange and yellow.

Screwball took an immediate interest in their wings, finding them similar, yet smaller, to her mother's. The two could fly before they could walk. Screwball was a little over a year old when she had discovered this and was just learning to walk on four legs herself. She was able to fly at their age too, but she noticed that she did not have wings. She also realized that their eyes looked in the same direction, but she already knew that Dinky's eyes were unique.

Some point at this age, she met a pony she had never seen before and jumped back at the sight of her. Her short curly mane was purple with streaks of white, her coat was a light pink, but it was her eyes that interested Screwball the most. They were different. They

were nothing like Dinky's. She seemed to have no blackness in her eye, only a purple swirl.

Screwball reached out to touch the filly and at the same time, the filly reached out to touch her. Their hooves met and Screwball flinched at the smooth texture she was feeling. It was not a hoof, it was glass. Her parents had already observed that Screwball seemed quite intelligent and understanding for a foal her age and it did not take long for her to conclude that the strange filly was indeed her.

That was when she knew.

Fluttershy found her daughter sitting in front of the full-length mirror and flew down to her.

"So there you are," she said, reaching her hooves out to her. "I've been looking…"

"Differ," Screwball uttered.

Her mother blinked in surprise. She had gurgled a few words before, her first one being 'Dinky,' much to Discord's displeasure (he had hoped it would be 'dada'), but this was new.

"What did you say?"

The foal pointed to the mirror. "Differ."

Her hoof then tapped at the reflection of her eyes.

As Screwball grew older and developed better speech, she began noticing other things that were different about her. Her diet was the first indicator. Her friends always stared at her when she drank her sip cup instead of the milk inside it. Her playmates, their mothers and her own mother did not do the things she did. Objects did not appear out of nowhere on their command, nor did they just come to them from afar. It happened to Dinky, but not as much. She noticed her father did the same things as her frequently, even more often.

Ah yes, her dad. She was only starting to realize how different he was from the other ponies: his size, his shape, his appearance, his behavior. She only saw the contrast whenever her mother or one of the other ponies was next to him.

When she was four, she finally approached her parents about this. It was after they read her a bedtime story that she asked.

"Mommy, Daddy?"

"Yes, dear?" her mother responded softly.

"Why am I different?"

Discord and Fluttershy paused, their smiles disappearing as they shared a look.

"You're not different, honey," her father insisted. "You're just… unique."

"Like your friend Dinky," Fluttershy added.

"She don't do magic," Screwball said. "Not like mine. Twins have no magic. None. Why me? Why my eyes different?"

Her mother glanced to the side. "Sweetie…"

The filly pointed to Discord. "Daddy *very* different."

He winced. "Screwy, I think you…"

"Why?"

The couple looked at each other again and sighed simultaneously.

"Yes, my love," Fluttershy said. "You and Daddy are different. As you may have noticed, I am a pegasus, your father is a draconequus."

Screwball tilted her head. "Like Uncle Spike?"

Her mother laughed. "No, honey. A *draconequus* . They are wonderful, majestic creatures with incredible powers that can bend

reality."

Discord put his paw over his heart. "My dear, you flatter me! Yet your flattery is an understatement. I am the Spirit of Chaos and Disharmony! It is my duty to make the world less boring with my little…quirks. After all, what would this world be without chocolate rain?"

Screwball squealed and kicked her hooves happily in agreement.

"Anyway," Fluttershy continued, "it is very unusual for two different creatures to marry, so when your father and I fell in love, no pony really approved. We found a way through however and had you. You look like a pony, but you have your father's powers. There's never been such a pony born before."

"What your mother's trying to say is," Discord interrupted, leaning forward to brush his daughter's hair, "you are special, because you are a product of two species, two creatures who love each other very much despite their differences."

He smirked as he wrapped his tail around Fluttershy and pulled her closer. She was startled at first but then laughed and kissed him on the snout.

"Your father's right," she said to the filly.

"Well, duh!" Discord huffed. "Of *course* I am!"

She nudged him playfully in the ribs with her elbow. "Don't you worry about being different, honey. Your eyes, your powers are what make you special."

The draconequus leaned forward. "And there's no pony more special than our little Screwball!"

The filly smiled, assuring them that their words had helped. After her parents had kissed her goodnight and turned out the lights, Screwball closed her eyes and sighed contently.

Special. That's what she was. Special.

Credit for the song "Daddy Discord" goes to Sand Josieph. If you haven't heard the song, check it out, because it's brilliant! Of course, I had to tweak the lyrics a little.

I know Lightning Dash sounds a lot like Lightning Dust from the Wonderbolt Academy, but I couldn't think of a better name, so just roll with it.

First Day of School

Another chapter. I'm on a roll! Enjoy!

Screwball was five when she started school. There was some debate that morning on who would take her. Fluttershy worried that Discord would shock the young colts and fillies, but he saw it as his duty as Screwball's father to walk her to her first day of school. The pegasus finally gave in and allowed him to come.

As they slowly approached the red building, Screwball felt her stomach churn.

"What if the ponies don't like me?" she asked her parents.

"Of course they'll like you!" Discord replied, playfully twirling the propeller on her hat. "Why wouldn't they? After all, who wouldn't like the most adorable filly in all of Equestria?"

Silence fell over the schoolyard as the foals stopped their playing at the sight of the draconequus. Screwball gestured to them.

"Because I'm different?"

"And that's what makes you so adorable!" her father exclaimed, ruffling her mane.

"Everything will be alright, honey," Fluttershy assured the filly. "Dinky will be here, so will Thunder, Lightning and Cinnamon Stick."

After Applejack and Spike had tied the knot a couple of years ago, they had adopted two foals, a brother and a sister, from the Canterlot Orphanage, doubting that having their own foal would be possible. The colt, Cinnamon Stick, was Screwball's age and the filly, Cinnamon Roll, was but a toddler and not old enough to attend school.

"Your teacher is also Cheerilee," Fluttershy continued. "You remember her: Apple Blossom's mother? Oh, and she will be in your class too."

Apple Blossom was also around Screwball's age. They had not met that often, but she knew she was Aunt Applejack's real niece. She also remembered Cheerilee, a very nice mare who always smiled. The idea of her being her teacher made Screwball feel a little better, plus all her friends were going to be in her class.

"And don't worry if any pony makes fun of you," Discord added. "Just show them who's Boss and turn them into an orange!"

"Discord!" Fluttershy shouted with a glare. "That's no advice to give to our child!" She looked back at the filly. "If any pony cannot accept how special you are, that's their problem. As for your magic…don't get into any trouble and don't make any pony feel jealous…"

"She deserves to show off her powers!"

The pegasus shot him another warning glare before continuing. "Promise me you'll behave. Okay, honey?"

Screwball nodded. "I'll be good, Mommy."

"Good." She kissed her on the forehead. "Now, have you got everything? Your lunch?"

"Check."

"Your notebook and pencils?"

"Check."

"Don't forget your apple for the teacher!" Discord exclaimed, snapping his fingers.

An apple appeared in Screwball's hoof. She gasped and then chuckled as a worm popped out of it.

"Discord," Fluttershy warned.

The draconequus laughed as he replaced the apple with a ripe worm-free one. "Just kidding, darling! Don't take everything so seriously!"

"Screwy!"

The family turned to see the wonky-eyed unicorn rushing towards them. Screwball embraced her best friend happily.

"Isn't this exciting?" Dinky cried, bouncing up and down. "It's our first day of school! We're gonna have so much fun and make lots of new friends!"

The unicorn grew even more excited as three pegasi flew up the road.

"Hey, Fluttershy!" Rainbow Dash greeted. "Looks like our kids are in the same class."

"Thunder! Lightning!"

The twins landed with a thud as Dinky tackled them both. Applejack chuckled as she appeared behind them. At her side was a light brown colt with a black mane and autumn brown eyes.

"I see y'all are just as excited as Cinnamon Stick here," the cowgirl said, patting her adopted son on the back.

Dinky looked up and blushed slightly at the sight of Cinnamon Stick. Screwball noticed him returning her blush.

"H-h-h-hi, D-d-d-dinky," he stuttered.

Dinky waved her hoof shyly. "Hi."

Fluttershy, Rainbow Dash and Applejack shared a knowing look.

Every pony looked up as the school bell rang and Cheerilee emerged from the building.

"Alright, kids! Come inside!"

Fluttershy gave her daughter a light shove. "Go on! We'll come and pick you up at three."

After receiving another kiss, Screwball joined her friends as they raced up the steps. She stopped at the door.

"Oh, Ms Cheerilee!" she exclaimed, handing her the apple. "This is for you!"

"Why thank you, Screwball," Cheerilee said with a smile.

Once the children were inside, Fluttershy approached the teacher with concern in her eyes.

"Um, I should let you know that Screwball sort of…takes after her father in…"

Cheerilee held up her hoof. "I'm fully aware of Screwball's…talents."

"Oh, well…sometimes she can't control herself and…if she causes you any trouble…"

"You just let me worry about it."

"She's also a little sensitive about her eyes…"

"She'll be treated like any other pupil, I guarantee. Don't fret, Fluttershy. She's in good hooves."

Fluttershy smiled at the teacher as she closed the door, but she was still unsure. Discord scooped her up in his arms.

"She'll be fine, dear," he assured her. "After all, she is our daughter."

"That's what I'm afraid of," she muttered.

Cheerilee attempted to get her new students to settle down. "Alright, class! I know you're excited and all. You'll find your name on your new desk."

The schoolhouse had twelve desks in total. Screwball found hers in

the third seat of the second row. She was thrilled to see that Dinky got the seat next to her. Thunder and Lightning sat in the front row while Cinnamon Stick got the back left corner. Screwball felt more comfortable being surrounded by her friends.

"Well, welcome to the new school year, my little ponies!" Cheerilee announced. "I'm your teacher, Ms Cheerilee. We're going to spend this morning getting to know one another. Everyone turn to the pony next to you and introduce yourselves."

When Thunder Dash turned to his right, he met the green eyes of an earth pony he had not met before. She had a yellow coat, a few freckles on her cheeks, and an orange mane tied into two pigtails. They sat there motionless for a second before Thunder spoke:

"Hey."

"Hey," the filly muttered in return.

He held out his hoof. "Thunder Dash."

Without breaking eye contact, she accepted his hoof. "Apple Blossom."

"Oh! You're the teacher's pet, err, daughter, right?"

She nodded slowly. "And Rainbow Dash is your mom?"

"Uh-huh."

They did nothing but stare at each other for a long while.

Screwball's desk partner on her right was a white unicorn with red, white and blue striped hair. She flinched at the sight of the earth pony's eyes. Screwball eagerly extended her hoof.

"Hi! I'm Screwball!"

The unicorn hesitantly shook her hoof. "Aquafresh."

"Isn't this all exciting?"

"Uh…yeah. Hey, are you…?"

Cheerilee tapped her ruler on her desk to get every pony's attention. "Alright, now we're each going to introduce ourselves to the class. State your name and please share something interesting about yourself. I will go first as an example." She cleared her throat. "My name is Cheerilee, I am happily married and currently teaching a wonderful class!"

Screwball tried to pay close attention to the others as they introduced themselves, but the only ones she really listened to were her friends.

"I'm Lightning Dash!"

"And I'm Thunder Dash!"

"And we're going to be Wonderbolts!"

"Just like our parents!"

The twins did a hoof bump before Apple Blossom spoke:

"My name is Apple Blossom and that's my mommy up there."

There was much chatter among the students, until Cheerilee's voice silenced them. "Yes, Apple Blossom is indeed my daughter, but I assure you she will be treated as equally as the rest of you."

Dinky was very excited for her introduction: "I'm Dinky Doo and I like muffins!"

Screwball giggled slightly and then realized it was her turn. "I'm Screwball and my dad's the Lord of Chaos!"

The room became so quiet you could hear a pin drop. Screwball shrank at the thought that maybe she had gloated, despite what her mother had told her. She had not meant to brag, but the teacher had asked for something interesting, and well, that was the most interesting thing about her.

She could not understand why every pony was so shocked. Based

on how the twins were looking at her, she had the feeling that what she said was wrong. Why? It was not like they did not know. It was not like she had grown a second head.

"Did I say something wrong?" she asked the teacher.

Cheerilee shook her head. "No, Screwball, you said nothing wrong. Let's continue."

"I'm Aquafresh," the unicorn beside her said, rather shakily, "and my mom's a dentist."

Screwball did not hear the rest of the introductions, or pay attention as Cheerilee began the lesson. She was too busy listening to the whispers of the two colts behind her.

"She's the one my sister told me about! Her daddy's supposed to be a big scary monster!"

"Yeah! I think I saw him this morning!"

"My sister tells me she's as much a freak as he is!"

"Yeah! I mean look at that hat she's wearing!"

She protectively held onto her treasured hat from Aunt Pinkie.

"And what's up with her eyes? Is she blind or something?"

Her head wrenched around her neck as she faced the colts. "I'm not blind!"

"Screwball!"

She faced Cheerilee, realizing that she had said that out loud.

"What's going on?" the teacher asked crossly. "Are you paying attention?"

"Sorry, Ms Cheerilee," she pleaded. "But…they're saying mean things about me."

"Tattle tale," whispered the boy behind her.

"Is this true, Gold Digger?"

The colt with golden fur and black hair shook his head. "No, Ms Cheerilee. We were just talking about her eyes."

The teacher squinted at him. "Your sister was a pupil of mine, so I expect you to be familiar with the rules of this class. Every pony, let it be known that from now on, there will be no talking during the lesson!"

Screwball glanced over at Apple Blossom and tried to copy her pose by sitting upright and folding her hooves on her desk. She could not get in trouble on the first day of school. Mom would get upset.

She flinched as she felt a prick on the back of her neck. She glanced around and shrugged it off, assuming it to be a fly. Then she felt it again. It did not hurt really, but she found it quite annoying. Then something hopped onto her desk: a rubber band. She looked at the golden colt out of the corner of her eye. He and his friend were snickering with pleasure.

She thought of what her father had said numerous times that morning: *If any pony makes fun of you, show them who's Boss.* She did not want to disappoint her mother, but these colts needed to be taught a lesson. She had to be subtle in her revenge, for Cheerilee knew about her powers.

Screwball glanced at the rubber band that had missed and remembered Aunt Pinkie showing her something called a Cat's Cradle. She smiled deviously as she made a rubber band appear between Gold Digger's legs and copied the trick. When she was successful, she tried it on the other colt.

Then the bell rang for recess and the two boys tripped out of their seats.

"What the…?" Gold Digger uttered, looking at his tied legs.

Thunder and Lightning gawked at the sight and gave Screwball a questioning glance. She nodded with a devilish grin.

"Nice," Lightning muttered, giving her a hoof bump.

"Let's get out of here before the teacher notices," Thunder whispered.

The fillies agreed and rushed toward the playground. For the first five minutes of recess, Screwball and Dinky spun a rope while the twins competed over who could jump the longest.

"Nine, ten…" Dinky counted. "Uh…what comes after ten?"

"Eleven," Screwball continued. "Twelve, thirteen…hey, guys! Watch this!"

She let go of the rope, but it kept spinning as if some pony was still holding that end. Dinky gasped and released her end as well.

"Awesome!" the twins exclaimed.

"We have the coolest friend ever!" Lightning declared.

"And the sneakiest!" Thunder added.

"Who wants to play tag?"

The twins stopped jumping, entangling themselves in the rope.

"I do, I do!" Dinky hopped excitedly.

The three laughed at their friend's enthusiasm and followed her to join the other students as they gathered round. Screwball's smile faded when she saw that Gold Digger was the one who had made the announcement. His blue eyes met hers and they gave each other a mutual glare.

"Sorry," he said. "This game is for *ponies* only!"

"But I *am* a pony," Screwball insisted.

"No, you're not. You're only *half* a pony. My big sister Diamond Tiara told me so!"

Many of the foals gasped, not believing there was such a thing as a half pony.

"You saw that big monster?" Gold Digger asked them. "That's her *daddy* !"

They shrieked in horror.

"My big sis said your daddy took over Equestria! Three times! He's the baddest of bad guys! He's evil!"

Screwball had no idea what he was talking about, but she stomped her hoof in anger. "Daddy's not evil!"

"He is evil! That means you're evil too! Look at her eyes!"

"Hey!" the twins cried, standing in front of their friend.

"Leave her alone!" Thunder Dash cried.

"What's wrong with you?" Lightning demanded.

"What's wrong with *me* ?" Gold Digger repeated. "What's wrong with *her* ? She's got funny eyes! Like her dopey friend over there!"

Screwball gasped and glanced at Dinky, who was on the verge of tears. Picking on her was one thing, but no pony made fun of Dinky! *No pony!* She might look different, but she was not a dope!

Gold Digger made Screwball so mad she just wished the sky would come crashing down on him! The students looked up as a dark shadow covered them and screamed when they saw a piano hurdling directly towards Gold Digger. They all scattered out of the way. Screwball managed to grab Dinky before the instrument hit the ground, smashing into pieces.

As soon as she heard the crash, Cheerilee rushed out and gasped at the sight of the broken piano. How had that gotten into the schoolyard? She looked towards Screwball, who had a guilty look on her face.

Fluttershy knew something was up when her daughter did not come out of the building immediately. Dinky then explained that Cheerilee

had kept Screwball after class. Expecting the worst, Fluttershy entered the classroom. Cheerilee was sitting expectedly at her desk, Apple Blossom sitting at her own and Screwball on a stool in the corner. As soon as she saw her mother, she faced the wall in shame.

"I appreciate you coming here, Fluttershy," the teacher said bluntly.

"What's going on?" the pegasus inquired.

"Apple Blossom, would you wait outside, please?"

The filly said nothing and obeyed her mother.

"Have a seat, Fluttershy."

Fluttershy pulled up a chair and sat across from Cheerilee.

"It appears that there was a little…accident today."

The pegasus glanced over at Screwball. "What happened?"

"Well…how do I put this? A piano dropped from the sky."

Fluttershy's eyes widened in shock. "A piano?!"

"Yes. I checked, and there was no moving cart in the sky at the moment."

"You think…Screwball?"

Cheerilee looked to the filly in the corner. "Well, Screwball?"

She turned her head slowly, wincing at the expression on their faces.

"I didn't mean to!" she insisted. "They were making fun of me and Dinky! I didn't want it to happen! They made me so mad!"

"Honey, you promised you would behave!" Fluttershy shouted, almost too loudly.

"They called Daddy evil!"

Her mother's angry expression changed into one of fear. She then faced the teacher again.

"I assure you it won't happen again."

"See that it doesn't," Cheerilee said coldly. "You may go home now, Screwball."

The filly slid off the stool and smiled nervously up at her mother. The glare she received in return caused her to hang her head.

"We're going to talk with your father about this."

"A piano?" Discord said, looking up from his bowl of paper and over to Screwball. "A bit dramatic, don't you think? A pile of bricks would have sufficed."

"Discord!" Fluttershy gasped.

"Would serve the brat right for picking on *my* daughter!"

They were sitting at the dinner table. Fluttershy had just explained the events at school.

"I also tied his hooves into a Cat's Cradle," Screwball admitted, picking at her peas.

Her father guffawed. "You did?! What'd you use? A string or rubber band?"

"Rubber band. He threw rubber bands at me first."

"Giving him a taste of his own medicine, huh?" He clapped his hands. "Genius! Pure genius, that's what it is!"

Fluttershy was appalled. "Don't encourage her! She could have hurt some pony!"

"Those runts should have thought of that before they mocked our beautiful daughter!"

"He said you were evil," Screwball stated.

They both turned to her with wide eyes.

"Who told you that?" Discord demanded.

"Gold Digger," she replied. "He said you were evil, and that I was evil too."

"Sweetheart," her mother said, stroking her mane tenderly. "You're not evil and neither is your father."

Screwball looked her father in the eyes. "He said you took over Equestria."

Discord shrank guiltily into his seat. "Um…yes. I took over Equestria once…or twice, but that was a long time ago."

"You see, honey," Fluttershy explained, "your father was…evil, long before we met."

"Seems like a thousand years ago," the draconequus reminisced. "Actually, it was. I was ostracized because of my appearance and well…you could say I went crazy…like you did today with the piano. The princesses punished me by turning me to stone for a thousand years. When I was released…I met your mother. We didn't start on the friendliest of terms. She was one of the bearers of the Elements of Harmony, the only things that could defeat me. She was Kindness, your Aunt Twilight was Magic, Rainbow Dash was Loyalty, Pinkie Pie was Laughter, Applejack was Honesty and Rarity was Generosity.

"I came up with a plan to dispose of the Elements of Harmony, but that didn't work out, so I tried something else. You see, I…"

He did not want to go into detail of what had happened. He did not want his daughter to think him a monster. Thankfully, Fluttershy summed it up gently.

"He said he would leave Equestria be in exchange for a willing bride."

He sighed in relief. "Yes, I…had grown rather lonely over the years and…your mother was the one who accepted the deal."

Screwball's eyes widened. "You were forced to marry Daddy?"

Fluttershy hesitated. "At first, yes. But then I got to know your father, and…"

"That's when we fell in love," Discord finished, placing his hands on her shoulders. "Your mother is an amazing mare. Remember that. She was the only one who had truly accepted me back then. I then realized that I could not have Equestria and her at the same time, and I could not live without her, so…"

She took his paw. "We got married."

He grinned and kissed her lightly on the lips, making Screwball gag. "Yes, we did. She brought out the good in me and I don't do evil anymore."

"So never you mind what Gold Digger said."

"But he made fun of Dinky too!" Screwball reminded them.

"And that was wrong of him, but if that piano had hit him, would that have made you any better?"

She hung her head. "No."

"Good."

"So…Daddy's not the baddest of bad guys?"

Discord chuckled. "No. Well, once upon a time…" He trailed off as Fluttershy poked him in the ribs. "I mean no! I found something better than chaos."

He smiled at his wife and she returned his smile.

"Remember this, honey," Fluttershy said. "When it comes to love, appearances are insignificant."

"Indeed," Discord agreed. "It's the most powerful form of chaos there is!"

Sheesh. It's hard to write dialogue for five-year-olds. Actually, I remember being five and we argued like teenagers (or is it that teenagers argue like five-year-olds?).

All the OCs are my creation, and yes, Aquafresh is Colgate's daughter. It was either Aquafresh or Crest. Why am I suddenly craving minty toothpaste?

In case you didn't read the first story, yes, Big Mac and Cheerilee are married and Apple Blossom is their daughter.

And if you don't agree with Applespike, shrug. It's just a fanfic and I can ship whoever I like!

Insanity

WARNING: CRAZINESS!

As the years went by, Fluttershy and Discord noticed that their daughter possessed talents other than chaos. Like her mother, she had the ability to communicate with the animals and had a decent singing voice. They discovered another gift of hers one evening.

"Mom? Dad?"

"Yes, dear?" Fluttershy replied.

"Where do babies come from?"

Her parents both dropped their forks. Discord nearly choked on his cotton candy.

"W-w-why do you ask, dear?" he stammered.

"Since Aunt Rarity had her baby, I want to know."

The couple looked at each other nervously.

"Well, sweetie," Discord said, rubbing the back of his neck. "Babies come from…um…"

"The stork!" Fluttershy intervened.

"Yea—what?"

"The stork left you on our doorstep!"

"Yeah! The stork!"

Screwball blinked at them. "No, he didn't."

"Of course, he did!" Discord insisted.

She narrowed her eyes. "You're lying to me."

"No, I'm not!"

"Stop it, Daddy!"

"Hold on a second!" Fluttershy interrupted. "How do you know we're lying, sweetie?"

She shrugged. "I just feel it."

From then on, they knew not to lie in front of Screwball, though her question was not answered until many years later.

Gold Digger and his friend Silver Tray continued to pick on her and Dinky, but she kept herself composed, most of the time. There were a couple incidents involving wedgies (she gave them underpants first) and whoopee cushions, but she had not gone as far as the piano accident in a while.

The laugh was on them when she was the first in her class to get her cutie mark. The Ponyville Zappers and the Baltimare Orioles were playing at Funway Park and Screwball begged her father to take her. Fluttershy could not join them because she was at the spa with her friends.

Discord yawned during the first few innings, because they were filled with walks and strike outs and ponies barely even ran. Screwball, however, was enticed in the entire spectacle and bounced in her seat, cheering and waving a foam finger. It got boring for her by the sixth inning, as the ball had only been hit twice. Both pitchers were equally horrible.

She glanced at her father, who was on the verge of falling asleep. Her mother was not here and she knew she would get angry if she found out, but this game needed more excitement.

The Orioles were up to bat now. Their team was leading fifteen to thirteen. The pitcher was looking very tired and nervous. *There's no harm in helping him a little* .

As soon as the ball left the pitcher's hoof, the audience gasped as it

moved in a corkscrew motion. When it hit the catcher's mitt, the umpire cried out: "Strike One!"

"What?!" the batter protested. "No fair! It was a foul!"

"It hit the mitt!" the catcher argued.

Discord woke from his near slumber, his attention finally caught.

"There was no way I could have hit that!"

Shut up, Screwball thought. With that, the batter's mouth was zipped closed. Screwball gasped at her mistake and instantly made the zipper vanish, but her dad and most of the ponies had already seen it.

Discord stared at his daughter in surprise. She slumped guiltily into her seat.

"I…I…I…"

"Why, Screwball Fluttershy Draconequus!" he exclaimed, dramatically putting his paw over his heart. "I never thought my own daughter would stoop so low as to cheat!"

"I'm sorry, I…"

"Amateurs cheat." He whispered in her ear. "The professionals *sabotage* ."

She looked at her father in disbelief, seeing the mischievous grin on his face. Screwball's lips curled to match his grin.

As the pitcher wound up again, she put a silent curse on the ball. Before he could throw it, the ball leapt out of his hoof and circled in the air.

"What the heck?!" he cried out.

"See?" the batter pointed. "They've got a remote control ball!"

Suddenly, the ball rocketed toward him and knocked him on the

head. He landed on the ground with a thud.

"Ooh," Screwball cringed.

"He's fine," Discord said, waving it off. He turned her head toward the centerfield. "That mare over there has done nothing but file her hooves this whole game! I say we bring her attention to the field."

The filly nodded and picked up the ball with her magic, sending it hurdling towards the center fielder.

"Mittens, watch out!"

The mare looked up and squealed. She stuck out her glove, but the ball was going so fast that it burnt a hole through the fingers.

"Some pony get that ball!" the umpire commanded.

The players scrambled for the stubborn object as it zigzagged across the field. Screwball and Discord snickered in delight.

"Now *this* is entertainment!" the draconequus applauded.

Screwball then had another idea. The umpire jumped as arms and legs sprouted from the bat and it began to run the bases. Discord laughed hysterically.

"Genius, my dear!" he shouted, high-fiving her. "Absolute genius!"

The filly watched in amusement as the players scattered from the field, screaming for the bat not to attack them. She had not realized how much fun it was to mess with ponies' minds! Deep down, she knew it was wrong, but she was enjoying every second of this!

"Well, would you look at that?" her father mused.

"What?" Screwball asked.

He pointed to her rear and she glanced down to see that a picture of a screw and a baseball had appeared on her flank! Discord squeezed the filly tight.

"Well done, my dear! Daddy's so proud of you!"

Their excitement over her cutie mark died the next morning when Fluttershy angrily showed them the headlines of the newspaper: 'Fiasco at Funway Park!'

"Care to explain this?" she demanded, folding her hooves.

"Uh…" Discord stammered. "Did I mention Screwball got her cutie mark?"

At this moment, Screwball was ten years old. Most of her friends had received their cutie marks by now, except for Apple Blossom, who was as obsessed over it as her aunt Apple Bloom had been. Thunder had three storm clouds while Lightning had a lightning bolt. They had received them after busting some nasty storm clouds that were difficult for the pegasi to get rid of. Dinky had three muffins and Cinnamon Stick had a cinnamon stick, making their talents quite obvious.

They were in the schoolyard, making teams for a game of basketball. Unfortunately, Gold Digger and Silver Tray were the captains. Their cutie marks were three gold nuggets and a silver tray, respectively. The twins were picked first, since they were the best athletes. Then it came down to Apple Blossom, Screwball and Dinky.

"Let's see…" Silver Tray thought, rubbing his chin. "Okay, I'll take the blank flank."

Apple Blossom groaned as she went to join his team.

"Alright, let's play!" Gold Digger announced, bouncing the basketball.

"Hey!" Dinky cried. "What about us?"

The colt turned to the remaining pair. "Which do you want, Silver Tray? Discord Junior or Derpy Junior?"

"You kidding me?" Silver Tray grunted. "Derpy Junior can't keep her eye on the ball and Discord Junior keeps turning the ball into an orange!"

Screwball gritted her teeth. "My name is Screwball."

"Exactly the point!" Gold Digger taunted. "We're not letting a nut play with us!"

"Knock it off, guys!" Lightning shouted.

"You're not being fair!" Thunder agreed.

"Why don't you let them play?" Cinnamon Stick demanded.

Gold Digger tilted his head towards Screwball. "Why doesn't *she* go back where she belongs? In the Canterlot Gardens with her dad!"

Screwball had to bite her cheek to hold back her anger. Dinky put a hoof on her shoulder.

"It's okay, Screwy," she said. "I didn't want to play basketball, anyway."

"Hey, Derpy Junior!" Gold Digger called. "Catch!"

Dinky did not see the ball in time to catch it. It hit her square in the forehead, causing her to fall backward into a mud puddle.

"Dinky!" Screwball cried, kneeling down to her.

"Gosh, sorry!" Gold Digger said sarcastically. "Hope that didn't cause any brain damage. If there was any brain left to damage!"

Screwball narrowed her eyes at the colt, fire blazing within them. "You jerk! Dinky may be uncoordinated, but she's not stupid!"

"Speaking of stupid, how come you always wear that stupid hat?! You freaks deserve each other!"

A few other kids started laughing with him. Screwball looked down at her best friend covered in dirt, tears coming out of her

disproportional eyes.

"That's *it* !"

She stood on her hind legs and clapped her front hooves together with a great boom, causing the ponies to fall silent as they looked up at her in alarm.

"You want to play basketball? Fine! Let's play some basketball!"

Gold Digger let out a shriek as gold light enveloped around him, pressing him into a sphere. The others backed away as he bounced on the asphalt.

"Screwball, what are you doing?!" Cinnamon Stick exclaimed in horror.

"What does it look like I'm doing?" Screwball replied, sounding like a mad mare. "I'm scoring three points!"

The colt screamed as he was thrown across the basketball court and into the net. The insane filly then darted her eyes at Silver Tray. Before he had a chance to escape, he was pressed into a ball as well and tossed into the other basket.

"Woo hoo!" Screwball cried, throwing her hooves into the air. "That's six points for me, zip for you!"

A score board appeared matching what she had just announced. Apple Blossom raced inside the schoolhouse.

"Screwball, are you nuts?!" Dinky cried out.

"Nuts?!"

The crazy look in her eyes made the unicorn jump back.

"I'm not nuts! I'm *screwy* ! Cuz I'm Screwball, the Princess of Chaos! And you all made fun of me and hurt my friend! I shall have my revenge! Revenge!"

As she let out a frightening laugh, the sky turned red and a bolt of

lightning struck. Screwball paused as she felt a hoof on her shoulder. She turned to see Cheerilee's furious face staring back at her.

Screwball sat hunched on the school steps. Even though the door was closed, she could hear the conversation clear as day.

"That half-pony nearly killed my boy!" Filthy Rich bellowed.

"She didn't mean to harm any pony," Fluttershy insisted.

"She's a menace! You should expel her at once!"

"No!" Silver Tray's mother screeched. "A child like that should be in an asylum!"

"After all, what else can you do with the Devil's child?!"

Fluttershy gasped and Screwball heard a slap. "How dare you insult my child *and* my husband?!"

"Every pony, calm down!" Cheerilee shouted.

"Calm down?!" Silver Tray's mother shrieked. "Look at my son! Look at *his* son! That half-thing must be punished!"

"And what about *your* kids?" Derpy demanded. "They hurt my Dinky! Screwball was defending her!"

Screwball winced as she tried to block their words out.

"Freak!"

"Devil child!"

"Mad pony!"

"Halfling!"

"Monster!"

"She doesn't belong!"

A tear fell down her cheek.

The sound of the door slamming open broke her out of her trance. She looked up to see Gold Digger, Silver Tray and their parents send her death glares as they passed by. The boys held ice packs to their heads. Next came Derpy and Dinky, but they were silent. Then her mother appeared. She was not happy.

"You're lucky she didn't expel you," she said calmly.

Screwball hung her head.

"Honey, this is the third complaint I've received this month! I've let the other mishaps slide, but this…this is worse than the piano incident!"

"I'm sorry," the filly sobbed. "I…I don't know what came over me, I…I didn't mean…"

Fluttershy sighed and sat beside her daughter. "Look. It's noble that you were standing up for your friend, but you hurt those ponies just as they had hurt you and Dinky."

"I wish I had done worse."

"Screwball!"

"At least then it would have all stopped!" She sniffed. "They're right, Mommy. Maybe I am evil like they say. I…I don't wanna be evil!"

She cried into her mother's chest. Fluttershy stroked her mane tenderly.

"You're not evil, sweetie. You just made a bad decision."

"What if I can't control myself next time? What if I…?"

"You'll learn, honey. Maybe…you shouldn't use your powers anymore, at least not in school. Okay?"

Her daughter glanced up and nodded.

Dinky slowly approached them. "I still think you were pretty crazy back there, but…thanks for sticking up for me."

Screwball looked at her friend and then stood to embrace her.

"I have an idea!" Derpy exclaimed. "Why don't we forget this whole mess and go down to Sugar Cube Corner? A good muffin always makes me feel better!"

"Yay!" Dinky cheered in agreement.

"Can we, Mommy?" Screwball begged. "I'll clean the bathroom tonight!"

Fluttershy rolled her eyes, knowing that chore would only take a few seconds. "Alright."

The four were greeted by an exasperated Pinkie Pie.

"Hello…" she wheezed, "Derpy…Flutter…Screwy…Dinky…table…for…four?"

"Sure," Fluttershy uttered. "You alright, Pinkie?"

"Fine!" she gasped. "Running…store…myself…triplets…busy!"

A few years ago, Pinkie had met a clown who not only measured up to her level of silliness, but could do magic tricks. They were married and recently blessed with female triplets: Blueberry Pie, Raspberry Pie and Cherry Pie. Unfortunately, her husband was on tour with a circus right now.

Pinkie groaned as she heard a chorus of babies crying.

"Seat yourselves! Be right with you!"

She bolted upstairs to calm her children. As they entered the shop, Screwball gasped, seeing the twins, Cinnamon Stick and Apple

Blossom occupying a table.

"On second thought," she whispered to her mother, "let's go."

Fluttershy stopped her daughter and pushed her back in the other direction. "You can't avoid your friends forever."

"They think I'm a freak!"

"You don't know that. And if they do, I suggest you prove them wrong."

Screwball turned in the direction of the two colts and two fillies that were looking at her now. She took a deep breath and approached them.

"Hey," she uttered. "I know you probably don't want to speak to me again after what I did…"

"Are you kidding?" Lightning exclaimed.

"That was…awesome!" Thunder declared, giving his sister a hoof bump.

Screwball's ears perked up. "You mean you're not mad?"

"Mad?" Apple Blossom repeated. "Sure, we were a little freaked, but it's about time some pony taught those bullies a lesson!"

"Just don't go so loony on us again, okay?" Cinnamon Stick asked with a shiver. "That scared the hay out of me!"

"What are you standing down there for?" Thunder inquired.

"We're friends, aren't we?" Lightning questioned.

"Pull up a seat!"

Screwball smiled as she and Dinky joined their friends. No matter what happened, she always knew she could count on them.

Nobody said anything at the dinner table for the first fifteen minutes. The only sound was Discord's crunching on rocks. Fluttershy kept glancing at Screwball and tilting her head towards Discord. The filly shook her head in response. Finally, the draconequus slammed his fork.

"Okay, what's with the awkward silence?"

"Screwball," Fluttershy said slowly. "Isn't there something you want to tell Daddy?"

"About what?" Screwball asked innocently.

"About what happened at school today?"

"Alright, story time!" Discord grinned and leaned back on his chair. "What'd you do this time?"

"I…" Screwball stammered. "I…played basketball with Gold Digger and Silver Tray."

He raised an eyebrow. "That's…nice?"

She took a deep breath. "They were the basketballs."

Discord stifled a laugh, but he could not contain it. He pounded his fist on the table, clutching his stomach with his claw.

"You…played basketball…and they…were the basketballs! Oh, if I had been there to see that! Wait! I can!"

He vanished from his seat and then reappeared a few seconds later, rolling on the floor with laughter.

"Oh, that was priceless! You know you have your mother's evil laugh? Pure genius!" He wiped away a tear and spun his daughter around. "Brilliant, my dear! You've made your father proud!"

Screwball could not help but smile a bit.

"Discord, this is serious!" Fluttershy shouted. "Don't you see what's happening here?"

"That my little girl finally taught those brats not to mess with the House of Discord?"

She glared at him. "May I speak with you alone?"

Discord misread her question and set the filly down excitedly. "But of course, my dear!"

He followed his wife to the bedroom. Once she had shut the door, he twirled her around to face him.

"Usually, we wait until after dinner, but now's good."

She put a hoof to his puckered lips. "We need to talk about our daughter."

"Come now, she won't catch us."

He leaned toward her again, only to be harshly pushed away.

"No! I mean about what happened today!"

He groaned. "So she got a little carried away. Big deal!"

"It *is* a big deal! Doesn't it concern you…how much alike you two are?"

"Why should it? She *is* my daughter."

"That's exactly why we should be worried!"

He crossed his arms. "Are you saying you regret having my child?!"

"No! I love her as much as you do, but her powers…they're getting out of hand!"

"She's young! Let her have her fun!"

"Discord…the things they called her today…"

"Names are nothing."

"They called her a monster."

That caught his attention. "What?"

"Also freak, devil child, halfling…"

"Okay, okay! I get the picture!"

"Don't you see? She might wind up an outcast…like you were. What if something happens to make her lose control? What if…what if we have to turn her to…?"

He held up his claw. "Don't say it!"

"…stone."

He covered her mouth. "Now, now. Let's not exaggerate!"

She sighed as he slowly removed his paw. "I know it's a horrible thing to suggest, but it could happen."

"No, it won't."

"How can you be so sure?"

"Because she's *your* daughter as well." He gently lifted her chin. "She may have my demented mind, but she also has your good heart. That's how I know that no matter how many times she loses control, she will not go down the path I left long ago." He chuckled. "Besides, you've gone insane a couple times yourself."

She gasped and slapped his paw away.

"What?" he shrugged. "I love it when you go nuts! It's so… attractive."

She put her hooves on her hips. "That's it! You're sleeping on the couch tonight!"

Discord paused as she exited the room.

"W-what?!" He pursued her. "You can't kick me out of bed! I'm the master of this house! I'm the one with magic powers!"

Fluttershy flew down to her daughter. "Screwball, honey, your daddy

needs a time-out tonight."

"Okay, Mommy," Screwball snickered.

"Huh?" Discord uttered. "What do you mean a time-out? Fluttershy!"

The pegasus slammed the bedroom door behind her. Discord tried the knob, but it was locked. Then he tried teleporting inside only to realize that a magical barrier had been put up. He pointed accusingly at his daughter.

"She put you up to this, didn't she?"

Instead of getting an answer, a pillow and blanket appeared in his hands. He laughed nervously.

"Screwy," he purred. "Sweetheart, you know that baseball bat you've always wanted?"

A metal bat appeared in her hooves. "Already got it."

"Whatever she's paying you, I'll pay you more!"

She pretended to think about it. "No. I'm just going to bed early."

He gawked as she headed to her room. "Don't you walk away from me, young lady! I'm not finished with you! I make the rules around here! I…"

He stopped as she shut the door in his face. He groaned and pulled at his hair.

"I've been outsmarted by a ten-year-old. No, a ten-year-old and her mother! Her bossy, annoying, devious…irresistible mother!" He gazed at the gold band on his finger. "Oh Discord, what have you gotten yourself into?"

Welcome to the married life, Discord!

Not really much to say, just rate and review!

An Unusual Friend

You will be introduced to a new OC in this chapter and we finally get some action!

Freak, monster, devil child, doesn't belong…

The words echoed throughout Screwball's nightmares.

Go back to the Canterlot Gardens where you belong!

"No," she murmured, tossing in her bed.

You're evil, just like your daddy!

"No! NO!"

Discord was instantly at her bedside. Fortunately, she had not put a magical barrier around her room as well.

"Screwball, honey?" he gasped. "What's wrong?"

The filly shrieked as her eyes popped open. She sighed in relief at the sight of her father.

"I'm okay, Daddy. I just had a bad dream."

"Oh, I see." He sat upon her bed. "Care to talk about it?"

"It was…those things they said about me today…they won't go away…"

"Is that all?" He took her into his arms and patted her on the back. "There, there. What do I always say?"

Screwball scrunched her nose. "What fun is there in making sense?"

"No, no, the other thing."

"Never bring pie to a cake fight?"

"No, no, no! I mean about name-calling!"

"Oh. Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me."

"Exactly! Well, technically the sticks and stones won't hurt you either after a healing spell, but you get the picture."

She pulled away from his embrace and looked up at him desperately. "But Dad, what if they're right? I lost my mind today! I even scared my friends!"

He waved his paw as if it were a minor detail. "Every pony loses their mind once in a while. You should have seen your mother at her first Grand Galloping Gala!" He tapped his chin. "Actually, you can!"

He snapped his fingers and an image appeared on the wall. Screwball gasped at the sight of a slightly younger version of her mother in a torn ball gown, standing beside a huge net.

"I'll catch you yet, my pretties!" she said creepily to the animals cowering in fear. "Oh, yes. As soon as one of you little birds, or monkeys, or bears touches this net, you'll be mine! MINE!"

She then broke into maniacal laughter, lightning striking from nowhere. Screwball did not know whether to be scared or amused. It was hard to believe that the mare she was watching was her sweet, nurturing mother.

Discord sighed in awe. "Yes, isn't she ravishing?" He snapped the image away. "Now you know not to get on your mother's bad side. The treatment she gave you and I today was nothing."

"Okay, so it's not as bad as I thought," Screwball admitted. "It's worse! I'm crazy on both sides!"

She groaned as she collapsed her head onto her pillow.

"Screwball, Screwball, Screwball," Discord said, shaking his head. "*Every* pony's crazy! Some just show it better than others."

"I being one of them," she mumbled, flipping onto her side.

"It's nothing to be ashamed of, sweetie," her father assured her, stroking her head. "You have something that other ponies do not: chaos!"

"And where is that going to get me? Look at what it did to you!"

Discord was taken aback by this. Screwball sat up and faced him.

"I'm sorry, but…" She hugged her knees. "Sometimes I think I might go too crazy…that I might turn evil…that they'll have to turn me to stone!"

"Oh, honey, don't say such a thing!" He tenderly wrapped his arms around her. "No pony's going to turn you to stone, or bring you any harm of any sorts, not while I'm here to protect you." He wiped her tears from her face. "Did I ever tell you of the time I snapped in front of your mother?"

The filly shook her head with a sniff.

"Well, it happened while I had your mother imprisoned. It was her birthday and I brought her friends over for a visit. In the midst of that…she told them she didn't love me. She didn't know I was listening and…well, it broke my heart as well as my sanity. I'll spare you the details, but let's just say my rampage involved turning Aunt Applejack into cereal and Twilight Sparkle's horn into a candy cane."

Screwball snickered at the thought.

"It may sound funny to you, but if you had seen me at that time, you wouldn't have laughed." He sighed as he remembered that fateful day. "I had lost so much control that I ended up physically hurting your mother. I could no longer keep her, knowing what I did, knowing that she would never forgive me. So I let her go.

"But you know something? She returned to me and we finally confessed our feelings for each other!"

"So how does this apply to me?" Screwball asked, growing slightly impatient. "Are you saying that no matter what I do, every pony's

going to be okay with it?"

"Not every pony, only the ones that matter. Tell me, Screwy. After today's incident, did any pony forgive you?"

She pondered. "My friends?"

"Then they're the only ones that matter. For me, that was your mother and that is what saved me from losing complete control. Your powers are special, my dear, but never lose sight of what is really important. Understand?"

She did not understand completely, but she nodded anyway.

"Good," her father smiled. "Now let's get you back to bed, shall we?"

Screwball crawled back under the covers and smiled up at the draconequus as he tucked her in.

"Would you sing me a lullaby, Daddy?"

He paused and chuckled. "I think you'd prefer your mother to sing for you."

"No. Her voice is beautiful, but I also like it when you sing."

He sighed and sang the lullaby he had written for her. This time, he added a new verse:

" *Remember that one time*

I took you to that baseball game?

You got your cutie mark

And things were never quite the same.

Your wild pitches flew

Driving the ponies all insane

' *Cause I…am your daddy, Discord*

And you…are a piece of me. "

It was a subtle reminder of how special she was to him.

"I love you, Daddy," Screwball said when he was finished.

He kissed her on the forehead. "I love you too, my little abomination."

When Screwball awoke, it was nearly dawn. She often rose early, as it gave her the perfect opportunity to sneak out. She needed to clear her head.

After putting her hat on, she opened the door a crack and saw that her dad was still asleep on the couch. She floated into the air and slowly made her way to the front door. Seeing that she had not stirred her father, Screwball transported outside of the colorful castle and crossed the bridge into the Everfree Forest.

Teleporting was harder than it looked. At her current age, the filly could travel no further than a few feet. Even that would leave her slightly dizzy. This is why she ran the rest of the way.

She came upon a brown lake, one she had found a few years ago the first time she had snuck out. The water had not been brown then. She had turned it into chocolate milk so the creatures of the forest would not come for a drink, so she would be left alone.

This was her sanctuary. This was where she could spread her chaos freely. No rules, no judgment, no ponies, just her and chaos.

Miles away, in a forest much darker and more sinister than the Everfree Forest, Queen Chrysalis was sitting on her throne, plotting her next move. One of her servants approached cautiously.

"Uh, your majesty?" he whimpered with a bow. "The prince is here to see you."

"Oh, yes," the queen muttered. "Let him come forth."

The changeling who approached was slightly different from the others. While he had a sleek black body with a green beetle's back, translucent wings and deformed legs, he had blue hair flowing down to his shoulders and green eyes with black pupils. He was quite young, a foal at that, a small male version of the queen.

"Ah, my son," she said with pride.

She stepped down from her throne to inspect his growth. She lifted his chin so that he may look into her eyes.

"Today's the day you go on your first hunt. If you are ever to one day rule as King, then you must be able to find food for your subjects. Are you ready, my dear?"

The prince straightened up and held his head high. "I am, mother!"

"Show me! What is the first rule of hunts?"

"Do not get caught!"

"And the second rule?"

"Make sure the pony you change into is not around!"

"And our motto?"

"Love is weakness for the victim, but strength for us!"

"Excellent! Now, since you are still young, I suggest you keep your targets simple, perhaps a young foal of some sort. And steer clear of Canterlot. They are always on the lookout for 'suspicious characters.' And don't return until you've had your fill. Go, my son! Make your mother proud!"

The prince nodded and took to the skies. He had not left the Changeling Forest without an escort before and was not familiar with the outside world. He gawked at the greenness of it all. He imagined what it would be like to roll in that soft grass.

He shook these thoughts out of his mind. He had a job to do.

His expedition led him to the Everfree Forest. The best way to catch an unsuspecting pony was in a closed area. He was not aware of the forest's danger or its lack of ponies. He landed on the path and began his search.

His ears perked up as he heard a noise. He hid in the bushes and listened again. It was soft, it was haunting. It was the most beautiful thing he had ever heard.

The sound guided him to a clearing. He gawked at the sight. Where trees should have been, there were enormous candy canes with slightly less enormous gumdrops surrounding them. The ground was pink with orange and green polka-dotted toadstools and swirly lollipops growing up from it. What sort of place was this?

The prince jumped as something emerged from the muddy lake. It was a filly looking about his age wearing a mask and snorkel. The brown water dripped from her curly purple and white mane and pink fur. As she started humming, the prince realized that beautiful melody had been coming from her.

The filly sighed. "Snorkeling can get boring."

A small dingy appeared beneath her, a newspaper hat atop her head. The prince was astounded, swearing that he had not seen her horn.

"Sailing, however," she said.

She summoned a small mast and pulled up a flag with a screw and baseball on it, matching her cutie mark. Then she made an eye patch appear over her eye.

"Argh!" she cried. "Ahoy, mateys! Next stop, Fillydelphia, where we shall rob them of their gold, their jewels, and their cream cheese!"

The prince stifled a chuckle. This filly was quite amusing.

" *Yo ho, yo ho, a pirate's life for me!* " she sang.

At that moment, something pounded hard inside the prince's chest. He took it as his hunger and remembered what he was here for. He thought back to his mother's lessons and looked into the filly's mind for her loved ones. The first thing he saw startled him, for it was a hideous creature that he figured to be her pet. Next was a pegasus that he assumed to be the mother. That would not do. He had not mastered adult transformations yet. Then he saw a unicorn filly with strange eyes. He gagged at the thought of turning into a girl, but it was the best he could do.

He closed his eyes and concentrated, adopting the pony's shape. In a blaze of green fire, he had turned into the unicorn. The disguised changeling jumped out of the trees and approached the sailing filly.

"There you are!"

Screwball shrieked in surprise. She had not told any pony of this place, let alone her best friend.

"Dinky, what are you doing here?"

The prince gasped as the filly floated to shore, changing her paper hat into a propeller one. He then got a good look at her eyes as she removed the patch. They were unlike anything he had ever seen before and he could get lost in those hypnotic spirals.

"Dinky?"

He snapped out of his trance, remembering he was disguised as the unicorn filly (Dinky, was it?). He borrowed one of the excuses his mother taught him:

"I came looking for you! Your mother's worried sick!"

"But why are you out here?" Screwball asked, tilting her head. "Don't you know it's dangerous out here?"

"You're out here, aren't you?"

"Well yeah, but I practically live here. Besides, I thought this forest

scared you to death!"

The changeling hesitated. "Uh, yeah! But I got brave! Your mom's looking for you!"

He could feel the love on his tongue. Friendship was not the most filling of meals, but it had a decent taste.

Screwball, in the mean time, was growing suspicious. She could not explain it, but she could tell when ponies were lying and Dinky was not one to lie.

"You're not Dinky," she stated.

The changeling's false eyes widened and then he laughed. "Don't be silly! Of course, I'm Dinky!"

He squealed as he was lifted by the tail off the ground. He faced his adversary upside-down. No! He could not be caught on his first hunt!

"Put me down! It's really me! I'm Dinky!"

"No, you're not!" the filly snapped, stomping her hoof. "Show yourself!"

Then the prince was unwillingly changed back to his true self. Screwball gazed at the creature in wonder. Swiss cheese legs, cobweb hair, a deformed horn, insect-like wings: she had never seen anything like it before.

"What are you?" she asked, circling around him.

"How did you do that?!" the prince demanded, finally noticing something about the filly. "More importantly, how did you do that without a horn?"

"That's none of your business! Who do you think you are, posing as my friend? Impersonating ponies is not very nice!"

"But how did you know…?"

He cried out as she rammed his head into the ground.

"Answer my question! Who are you and what are you doing here?!"

"Are you nuts?!" the prince hollered before receiving another blow to the head.

"I'm *not* nuts! I'm Screwball!"

"What's the difference? Ow!"

"I'll ask you one more time! What are you doing here?"

He waved his forelegs desperately. "Look, I don't want any trouble! I was just so hungry and…"

The filly's mouth broke into a smile. "Well, why didn't you say so?"

The prince cried out once more as she dropped him. He rubbed his head in pain.

"If you're hungry, I can just give you something!" Screwball said cheerfully. "You like cotton candy?"

"Huh?" he uttered.

"How about chocolate milk?"

"What's chocolate milk?"

Screwball gasped as if she had been stabbed with a knife. "You've never had chocolate milk?! What sick, twisted home did you grow up in?! Oh well. I'd say it's about time you tried it."

She summoned a glass and dipped it in the lake. She handed it to the changeling, who looked at it like he had no idea what to do with it.

"Go on, drink it!" the filly urged.

He cringed. "You want me to drink mucky water?"

"It's not mucky water. It's chocolate milk! Trust me, you'll love it!"

He figured he should tell her that he did not eat or drink, but for

some reason he did not want to disappoint this filly. He was still trying to process how she had unmasked him and why she had not run away by now. So he hesitantly took the glass and raised it to his lips.

His eyes shot open as the liquid touched his tongue. He then chugged the rest of the contents down his throat.

"This stuff is *amazing* !" he exclaimed. "It tastes just like love!"

Screwball tilted her head. "Well, I don't know about that, but I told you it was good!"

She giggled as the peculiar colt scooped his glass into the lake. She still did not know what he was.

"I've never seen a creature like you before," she stated.

"I could say the same about you," the prince said, looking her over. "How do you do all this without a horn? And your eyes are very…"

"Strange, I know."

"I was going to say interesting."

She blushed. "Well, I'm a…unique pony. You could say I'm the only one of my kind."

"Really? Oh, what I would give to be the only one of my kind!"

"Why? Are there many of you?"

He fiddled with his glass. "Let's just say I have five thousand brothers and sisters at home."

"Five thousand?!" Screwball exclaimed in disbelief. "Golly! Imagine the grocery bills!"

The prince burst into laughter. "Actually, we get our food from…"

He trailed off as they heard a loud roar in the distance. The foals turned to see a large manticore leap out of the trees. He was in a

furious state, waving his scorpion stinger frantically. The prince grabbed Screwball's hoof.

"Let's get out of here!"

"But I can…" she tried to protest.

"Run!"

He practically lifted her off the ground as he pulled her along. She was amazed at how strong he was, considering he was slightly smaller than she was.

"Wait!" she cried, tugging herself out of his grasp.

"You crazy?" the changeling asked. "That thing is huge!"

She ignored him and approached the roaring beast.

"Easy, boy!" Screwball cried, holding out her hooves. "Or…girl. Which one are you?"

The manticore kept wailing.

"Would you shut up and stop moving for one second so I can help you?!"

This time, the creature stopped and turned his attention to the filly.

"That's better," she said, nuzzling his paw with her snout. "It's okay. I won't hurt you."

" *You* won't hurt *him* ?" the prince uttered.

Screwball looked up at the manticore with a smile. He then held out his other paw, revealing a thorn.

"Typical," she sighed. "You manticores should watch where you step. Now hold still. This will only take a second."

She used her magic to make the thorn disappear. The manticore roared in her face. The prince was about to cry out when the beast began licking her mane. Screwball giggled.

"Yes, yes, I know. You're welcome." She smoothed out her damped hair. "Run along now, and be careful."

The manticore nodded with a smile and vanished into the forest. The prince stared at the filly in awe.

"How did you…?"

"Mom told me to show every beast a little kindness," Screwball explained. "It amazes me how many angry manticores have thorns in their paws."

"That was amazing! You were…" he paused as he and the filly locked eyes. "You must be the bravest pony I've ever met."

She blushed. "You were pretty brave yourself, trying to get me out of danger. Hey! We weren't properly introduced. My name's Screwball."

He raised an eyebrow. "Screwball? That's weird."

"I know. Wasn't my idea."

"No, I mean it's weird, because my name is *Moth* ball."

She gasped. "We're both balls! We could invent a new sport with our names! Hey, you want to hang out?"

Prince Mothball blinked, as if he had never heard the expression before. "Hang out?"

"Yeah! I don't have school today. We can play all morning!"

"Play?"

She tilted her head at him. "What's the matter? Don't you know how to play?"

He said nothing.

"Oh. Well, I'll teach you!"

The prince was skeptical about this. He should really be returning to

the hive, but he was feeling so strange around this pony. He assumed it was because of the positive emotions emitting from her to his stomach. His mother had told him not to return until his belly was full, and he could obey that command by staying with the girl.

"Well…" he stammered. "Can I have more of that chocolate milk?"

Screwball giggled. "Sure."

Neither of them noticed the changeling scout that had been hovering above, disguised as a fly. He had been sent to keep an eye on the prince. The queen was not going to be happy about this unexpected turn of events.

What? Did I forget to mention that this was a love story? Sorry, there was only room for two categories.

Lecturing

A slightly shorter chapter this time. Again, thanks to everyone who's reviewed/favorited/followed so far!

Fluttershy shook her husband desperately.

"Discord, wake up!"

The draconequus only snuggled deeper into his pillow and groaned. "Oh, Fluttershy…"

"Wake up!"

He cried out as she rolled him onto the floor. He stood up and glared at her.

"What the heck was that for?!"

"Screwball's gone!" Fluttershy shrieked.

His eyes widened. "What do you mean *gone* ?"

"I went to wake her for breakfast, but she wasn't in bed!"

He waved his paw and huffed. "I'm sure she just went to the bathroom or the garden or something."

"I've looked everywhere!"

"The bowling alley?"

"Yes."

"The swimming pool?

"Yes."

"The ice cream room?"

"Yes."

"The bouncy room?"

"Yes! She's nowhere in the house! What if something horrible happened to her?"

He chuckled and patted her on the head. "Don't get so paranoid, honey. Screwball's a big girl. Wherever she is, she can take care of herself."

"Discord!"

He sighed. "Alright, if it will ease your worry, I will look for her."

He summoned a metal detector and scanned the ground. Fluttershy raised an eyebrow at this action until the machine beeped.

"I got her scent! Follow me!"

"Ha!" Mothball exclaimed, taking Screwball's knight with his rook.

The filly simply rolled her eyes and moved her queen with her magic. The chess piece suddenly came to life and sliced the rook with a marble sword.

"Checkmate," she said.

"Aw, man!" the prince groaned.

"Don't feel bad. You put up a pretty good fight."

"How'd you get so good at this?"

"My dad and I would play using both our magic."

"Your dad has powers like yours? I thought you were the only one."

She bit her lip, not wanting to scare her new friend off. "I'm unique

for…different reasons."

"I never knew hanging out could be so much fun!"

"Five thousand brothers and sisters and you don't hang out with them?"

"Well, they're not exactly my siblings. You see…"

He was cut short when Discord appeared between them, crushing the remaining chess pieces. Mothball jumped back in fright. The draconequus was crouched down on all fours, his fur standing on end, his teeth growling at the changeling.

"Step away from my daughter!" he barked.

"Daddy, wait!" Screwball protested.

" *That's* your dad?!" Mothball squealed.

Fluttershy then emerged from the bushes, rushing to her daughter. "Screwball! Thank goodness you're alright!"

"Mom?" Screwball uttered as her mother took her protectively in her arms.

"Fluttershy, I told you to stay put!" Discord hissed. "Let me take care of this pest!"

He was about to lash out when Chrysalis materialized in front of him. The draconequus paused and returned to his defensive position.

"Chrysalis," he snarled.

"Discord," the queen chuckled. "It's been a while, Dissy dear."

"What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be living out your exile in the Changeling Forest?"

"I bear no ill will. I was only fetching my son. I don't believe you've met Prince Mothball."

"Prince?" Screwball repeated.

"Son?" Discord snorted. "Aren't all changelings your children?"

Queen Chrysalis laughed as she proudly showed off her son. "Mothball is a special case. He is the heir to my throne."

Her head shot up as she felt a great wave of love. She looked between the draconequus and the pegasus. Their love was radiating out of them in a way the queen had never experienced. Such love emitted from the filly as well.

"And what's this?" she said with a dark chuckle. "I never fancied you a family man, Discord. And to think all it took to turn you from the evil Lord of Chaos to a fluffy do-gooder was a gooey romance with an itty, bitty, wimpy pegasus."

Fluttershy shivered but stayed strong and pulled her daughter closer to her. Discord held out his arm defensively.

"I think you should leave now, *your majesty* . And if you or any of your little hatchlings *ever* come near my family again…"

Chrysalis shrugged her shoulders. "I wouldn't dream of it. Come, son."

She did not give him a choice as she picked him up in her mouth.

"Bye," he mouthed to Screwball as his mother carried him away.

"Bye," the filly whispered sadly in return.

When they had returned to the castle, Screwball gave her parents a nervous smile that wavered as they glared down at her.

" *What* do you think you were *doing* ?!" her father bellowed.

The filly drew a circle with her hoof. "I was…I was…"

"You know you're not supposed to go into the Everfree Forest alone!" her mother snapped. "You could have gotten killed!"

"I'm not a baby, Mom! I go out there all the time!"

She covered her mouth as her secret spilled.

"What?!" Fluttershy screeched.

"I don't think the fact that she was out in the forest is the issue here," Discord grunted. "What were you doing with a *changeling* ?!"

"I don't understand," Screwball said. "What *is* a changeling?"

"A changeling is a heartless, soulless monster that takes the form of the one you love and feeds off your love for them, which is exactly what that Prince Hairball was doing to you!"

"That would explain why he looked like Dinky at first. But he didn't seem so bad…"

"He's a *changeling* !" he spat venomously. "He was feeding off your power!"

"But after I found out who he was, he stayed."

"So he could satisfy his appetite!"

"Don't you and Mom always say that every creature has a heart?"

He roared and slammed his fist against the wall. "Every creature but changelings! They *have* no hearts! Literally!"

He opened his chest, frightening Screwball and showing nothing inside.

"They are born without a heart! They are hollow! No heart, no compassion, no morals, no soul!"

"Discord, close that up!" Fluttershy commanded. "You're scaring our child!"

He groaned as she shut the lid. "Sorry for the dramatics, but you get the picture. Changelings are cruel, vicious and cunning! And of all the changelings you could have encountered, it had to be the

queen's favorite son!"

"He was just a kid," Screwball muttered.

"Doesn't matter! All changelings are the same!"

Fluttershy crossed her hooves. "You sound so sure. How do *you* know Chrysalis?"

He sighed. "Some time during my three years of exile, Chrysalis told me about her plot against Canterlot and asked me to join her. She said if the plan succeeded, I would be free to spread my chaos. I rejected her, of course, because not only did I think the plan was lousy, but I was a solo act."

She narrowed her eyes at him. "Is that all?"

"Well, we met a couple times over the centuries. You know she's about as old as I am? She stayed clear of me though, because I had no love for her to feed. Why? What did you…?" He paused when he caught the jealous rage in her eye. "Wait, did you…?" He burst out laughing. "You…you thought… me and…and Chrysalis?!" He ruffled his wife's hair. "Oh, you really are paranoid, my dear. You're the only mare who's ever caught my eye."

He then kissed her in desperation. "Okay?"

Fluttershy sighed. "Okay. As for *you* , young lady…"

Screwball hung her head. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to disobey you and I didn't know Mothball was a changeling. We were just having so much fun and…" She closed her eyes. "I deserve whatever punishment you have for me."

Her parents looked at each other, made a silent agreement and nodded.

"You're grounded for a week," Discord stated.

"You are not to leave the house, with the exception of school," Fluttershy clarified. "No friends over, no sweets…"

"Now honey, let's not go overboard!"

"NEED I REMIND YOU OF THE FIRST RULE OF THE HUNT?!" Chrysalis hollered, shaking the green palace that the changelings considered their hive.

"It wasn't my fault, mother!" Prince Mothball insisted. "She used her magic to get rid of my disguise! I don't know how she did it since she's not a unicorn…and she's just a filly!"

"Still, you disobeyed me!"

The prince cowered, fearing she was going to strike him, but the queen took a deep breath, calming herself down.

"Your hunt was not completely unsuccessful, however. Because of your carelessness, we now know that Discord is married, and has a daughter at that."

"Mother," Mothball stammered. "If I may, who is Discord?"

"Discord is the Lord of Chaos, or was, until he was weakened by the love of a female. Be grateful you do not have a heart, son. We cannot survive without the existence of love. It is what gives us our power. *Feeling* love, on the other hand, will only lead to your downfall…as it will for my old friend."

"What are you talking about?"

"What did you learn about this girl?"

He pondered. "Her name is Screwball, she's very powerful…"

"How powerful?"

"Like *really* powerful! It was incredible! She turned water into this thing called 'chocolate milk'…you should try it, Mother, it's awesome! She changed me back to myself just by yelling at me! She made these little things called 'chess pieces' move…"

"Hmm," the queen mused, rubbing her chin. "A spitting image of her father, no doubt." She smiled as a plan formed into her mind. "This little chaotic brat could be of use to us."

"Mother?" Mothball gasped. "You're not going to…hurt her, are you?"

"Indeed not. Not yet, anyway." She turned to her son. "I want you to find out everything you can about this Screwball. You seem to have gained her trust."

"But I don't understand. What are you…?"

"As long as Discord is thriving with power, and is on Equestria's good side, I cannot make my attack! For centuries, we have competed for Equestria's throne! I've been searching for his weakness, until I assumed that creature to be as heartless as we were! But now…he has something he cares about. *Two* things, to be exact. We can use his precious little family against him and take our rightful place as the dominant race of Equestria!"

Prince Mothball stared at his mother as she cackled evilly. He did not want to *hurt* Screwball. She had been nice to him. All the other changelings resented him, even the ones his own age, because he was next in line and they were not.

He had expected ponies to run at the sight of him if he had ever been discovered, but this filly, she had been unafraid. While she had been curious, she had treated him like he was nothing unusual. He now understood the reason for that after seeing her father. She must hate him now that she knew what he was. Still, he could not stop thinking about her: her voice, her laughter, her magic, her hair, her eyes…those swirly, enchanting, hypnotic eyes…

He felt that pounding in his chest again. What was with that? He must be getting sick or something.

Yes, this was widely inspired by *The Lion King 2,* with a hint of *Harry Potter* (the chess game). I also know that Screwball has

been paired with a changeling a few times and that got the gears turning in my head.

The part about changelings being literally heartless was my idea, but if anyone else has come with it, I did not know about it.

Secret

Ooh! Eight chapters in a week! I'm on fire!

"You want to try apple bucking again?" Cinnamon Stick suggested.

"Uh-uh," Apple Blossom said, shaking her head. "Not after what happened last time! I couldn't feel my legs for a week!"

"You smell nice," whispered Thunder Dash, who had been standing right behind her. "I mean…maybe you're a teacher like your mom!"

She scratched her head. "Huh. Hadn't thought of that."

"You'll need some sort of practice," said Lightning Dash.

"We could play school!" Dinky exclaimed.

Screwball and her friends were at Cinnamon Stick and Apple Blossom's clubhouse, which had been passed down to them from their aunt Apple Bloom. They had all been Cutie Mark Crusaders at one point, until Apple Blossom was the only blank flank left. Today they were going to fix that.

They were not alone. Thunder and Lightning had brought their four-year-old sister, Prism. She was the spitting image of her mother, from the wild rainbow mane to the cyan fur. The only difference was her father's emerald eyes. Cinnamon Stick had brought his younger sister, Cinnamon Roll, as well. The seven-year-old had a tan coat and platinum blonde hair tied up in a ponytail and she was just as eager to get her cutie mark, even though she had plenty of time ahead of her. The twins had also brought their family's pet tortoise, Tank.

While every pony pretended to be Apple Blossom's students, Screwball could not concentrate. She should be thrilled, as she had not had the chance to hang out with her friends since her grounding,

but her mind was on the friend she had lost.

Prince Mothball had looked so sad when his frightening mother took him away. She knew changelings had no hearts, but did that mean they had no emotion?

Her father had called them monsters, which appalled her. After all, neither he nor she liked being called such a thing. The prince had not looked monstrous. Sure, he was unusual, but so was she. In fact, she was fascinated by how different and mysterious he was.

Why had he stayed? Why had he not run off once his cover had been blown?

She remembered how he had reacted when that manticore had appeared. While he could have saved himself, he had taken her with him. Of course, she had been in no danger, but he had obviously thought otherwise and had tried to pull her out of it. If he was as heartless as her father had said, why would he have bothered?

"Screwball, are you paying attention?" Apple Blossom demanded, imitating her mother.

Screwball shook out her thoughts. "Sorry, guys. I'm…distracted today."

"Did you eat some bad muffins for breakfast?" Dinky asked.

She snorted in amusement. "No. I just… have a few things on my mind."

"Well get those things out of your mind!" Apple Blossom ordered, banging her stick on the map of Ponyville. "We have a lesson here!"

"Cut the theatrics for a moment, Blossom," said Lightning. "Can't you see Screwball's having a crisis here?"

"Maybe she has low blood sugar," Cinnamon Stick suggested.

"I made some rolls this morning!" Cinnamon Roll announced.

"Don't be silly," said Thunder. "Screwball eats nothing but cotton

candy and chocolate! She's *never* low on blood sugar!"

"Is she sick?" Prism asked.

"Now that's even sillier. Screwball's the Princess of Chaos. She *never* gets sick!"

"Yeah," Lightning groaned, rolling her eyes at her sister. "Don't be an idiot, Prism."

The tiny pegasus gasped. "I'll tell Mommy and Daddy you said a bad word!"

"Idiot's not a bad word!"

"Yeah!" Thunder confirmed. "A bad word would be…"

He was cut off as his mouth was suddenly zipped closed.

"What kind of big brother are you?" Screwball demanded.

Thunder grumbled as he unzipped his mouth. "Just tell us what's wrong, Screwy, so we can stop arguing about it."

She was not sure whether or not to tell her friends. She decided to run a test first.

"Do you guys know what a changeling is?"

Every pony gasped in horror, aside from Dinky and Apple Blossom.

"What's a changeling?" the two asked together.

"They're shape shifters!" Lightning declared.

"They're evil!" Thunder added.

"They're scary!" Cinnamon Roll shivered, hiding behind her brother.

"They take the form of the ones you love!" Cinnamon Stick exclaimed.

"And they eat that love!" Lightning finished.

"Like spaghetti!" Prism shouted.

"Our mom battled those guys at Flutterby Lily's parents' wedding!" Thunder claimed, punching his hooves in the air.

"They were tough!" Lightning grunted.

"But our mom was victorious!

"Our parents were there too," Cinnamon Stick reminded them. "So were Screwball's mom, Aunt Twilight, Aunt Rarity and Aunt Pinkie. But Mom said Prince Shining Armor and Princess Cadence defeated them in the end."

Lightning rolled her eyes. "Well, yeah, but mom fought them hard!"

"And knocked a hundred of them out!" Thunder added.

"Yeah!" Prism cheered. "Our mommy is awesome!"

"Shut up, Prism," Lightning muttered.

"You said another bad word! I'm telling!"

"Why did you ask, Screwy?" Cinnamon Stick inquired.

Screwball now knew she could not tell her friends. While she trusted them with her life, they would not understand.

"No reason," she lied. "Did I hear something about cinnamon rolls?"

As Prince Mothball headed to his chamber, he heard the buzzes among the changelings:

"How come *he* gets to be Prince? He's just a little brat! I've served this hive longer than *he* ever has!"

"He's nothing special, except that he looks different! Talk about discrimination!"

"The least her majesty could do is to pick a female to be heir!"

"Maybe he'll choose a queen when he inherits the throne."

"Ha! We've never needed a king and we don't need one now!"

The prince quickened his pace and pretended not to hear them.

"And how come *he* gets a bigger room?"

His chamber was the second largest in the hive, next to the queen's. The others slept in hexagonal alcoves, shared by up to twenty changelings. He could feel their glares of envy wherever he went.

The worst part was that being Prince was an honor he was not sure he wanted. He was not as clever or ambitious as his mother. Even the privilege of calling her 'his mother' made him weary. She showed him no tenderness. She did not even come to tuck him in or say goodnight. She was not the one to nurse him as a larva. That job went to the nurse changelings, though he had received special attention even then. He had a personal nurse that was ordered to look after him and no one else. The only time his mother wanted to see him was to prepare him for the throne and tell him of her plans.

He did not understand what made him so special. The others were right. He just had the fortune or misfortune of looking different. Chrysalis' heir *should* have been a girl to give birth to the changelings. He had pointed this out to his mother once and her reply was that he could worry about finding a queen later. It was not something for a boy on the verge of adolescence to think about.

As he crawled into bed, his mind wandered to the filly he had met over a week ago. He could not get her out of her head. The first time he saw her he thought she was pretty, even while drenched in chocolate milk. Her swirly curls were like wisps of purple and white clouds. Her fur was as pink as the sky at sunset. And her eyes, oh, he could not stop thinking about her entrancing lollipop eyes.

His chest pounded again.

"What the heck is wrong with me?!" he shouted, slamming his hoof on the bed. "She's just a stupid girl!"

He sighed in agony. No, she was not stupid. She had bravely faced

that manticore and had tactically found a way to tame it. He still thought her crazy, but that made her more interesting.

Indeed, there was no pony like her. As she had said, she was one of a kind.

He had to see her again, not because his mother had asked him to find out more about her, but because he wanted to. It was clear he was not going to get any sleep anyway.

Sneaking out of the hive was not going to be simple. There were guards at every exit and even the hallways were infested with changelings. So Mothball took the form of a fruit fly. Insects were quite easy and the first things changelings learned to transform into. His small body made him practically invisible to everyone in the hive and he was able to slip out into the outside world.

"And as Shining Armor and Cadence kissed, Rainbow Dash performed her famous sonic rainboom!"

Fluttershy had just finished telling her daughter the story of the changeling invasion in Canterlot. Screwball had requested it, not knowing what to expect. Queen Chrysalis sounded quite evil from her mother's description. Tricking a stallion into marrying her while imprisoning the real bride as well as Aunt Twilight certainly was quite monstrous. Was her son anything like her?

"I hope I didn't scare you," Fluttershy said.

Screwball shook her head. "No. But Mom, do you really believe all changelings are heartless?"

The pegasus smiled. "I'm sure your father was just exaggerating. Of course," she shivered, "after that incident in Canterlot, I almost believe him. Then again, I thought your father was a heartless monster before I got to know him."

"Hypocrite," the filly huffed.

"Do you know why I went with your father?"

"Because Equestria was in danger?"

"Well, that was part of it, but before I accepted the deal, I went to Zecora for advice. She told me that if I married Discord, there would be great happiness in my future, and that all he wanted was some pony to love him. I came to him with the belief that I could tame him." She chuckled. "I never expected what would become of it, like the fact that we would have a beautiful, special little filly along the way."

She leaned over and kissed her daughter on the forehead. "Goodnight, my angel. I love you."

"Love you too, Mommy," Screwball said with a smile.

Fluttershy opened the music box on the side table. It had been a gift from Discord on Screwball's fifth birthday. It played without the need of being cranked and alternated between "Hush Now, Quiet Now" and "Daddy Discord." Fluttershy then clapped her hooves, turning the lights off.

Hours after her mother had departed, Screwball still lay awake in bed. The changeling prince would not leave her mind. She remembered how he had not heard of chocolate milk or playing before. What kind of life had he led to not have tasted chocolate milk? Knowing his diet answered the question, but still! Five thousand brothers and sisters, and he did not know how to have fun?

He must be lonely , she concluded, which was probably ridiculous if he had five thousand playmates at home. *Unless he's an outcast like me.*

Her thoughts were interrupted by a rap at her window. She sat up in bed and turned toward the sound. A dark shadow was at her window. She slid to the floor and cautiously approached. Her eyes widened when she saw her intruder.

She lifted the window. "What are you doing here?"

"I wanted to see you," Prince Mothball whispered, "and have more of

that 'fun' we were having the other day."

Screwball glanced around. "Are you crazy? What if my parents saw you?"

"Why do you think I came here after dark? So you coming or what?"

"What if I don't wanna have fun with you? How do I know you won't just suck my love from me like a vampire?"

"I'll be careful, I promise. Besides, if I *wanted* your love, I wouldn't have come like this."

Despite how much she wanted to go with him, she had to be vigilant. There was a chance her dad could have been right.

She sighed. "Okay. Meet me at the chocolate lake in fifteen minutes."

The changeling brightened up. "Great! I'll see you!"

Screwball shut the window as Mothball flew away. She grabbed her hat, but before she put it on, she looked in the mirror and smoothed out her hair. Her hoof was on the doorknob when a thought occurred to her.

"Hold on a second."

She opened the window again and flew out.

It was much faster to reach the lake by flight than on foot. Mothball had beaten her to it.

"I'm glad you came," he said with a grin.

"Don't get happy just yet," Screwball warned. "I want to know what this is all about."

The prince sighed. "I guess your parents told you a lot about changelings, huh? Well, my mother told me a lot about your

parents."

Curious, she sat down beside him. "What about them?"

"Well, for starters, she told me that your dad was the Lord of Chaos that took over Equestria two or three times."

"He's not like that anymore," Screwball insisted. "Not since he met my mom."

"Yeah, she said that too. Hey, how did that happen anyway?"

"My parents, you mean?"

"Yeah. Don't take this the wrong way, but how did a pony fall in love with the evil Spirit of Chaos?"

Screwball sprawled in the grass. "Well, it's a funny story really. The last time Dad took over Equestria, he asked for a bride if he would stop his chaos. My mom was the only one brave enough to do it." She giggled. "I've heard the story so many times, yet they keep adding new things. For instance, my mom told me tonight that she went because she thought she could tame Daddy.

"They were engaged for a really long time. Every night, Dad would ask Mom if she loved him. They made a deal that they would not get married until she said yes. Daddy said that his plan had worked in reverse and he was falling for her instead. One day, he let her go."

The prince blinked in astonishment. "But I thought you said he was in love with her!"

"He was. He did everything he could to please her: gave her a comfortable bedroom, created a garden full of plants and animals, took her on romantic dates, you get the picture. But he knew she wasn't completely happy, because all she wanted was her freedom. So he gave it to her.

"A few days later, Mom realized how unhappy she was without Dad and went back to him. On the way, she ran into a pack of Timberwolves. Dad heard her screams and saved her. He brought her back to the castle and then they confessed their love for each

other! But they weren't ready for marriage yet and didn't tie the knot until a year later. Then they had me!"

Mothball had listened to the entire story intently, watching the filly's excited glow as she told it.

"That's…" he stammered. "That's the most romantic thing I've ever heard."

Screwball's cheeks turned pinker. "You know, my dad may seem scary at first, but he's a real softie once you get to know him."

He laughed nervously. "I think he'd prefer to *not* know me."

"So what's your dad like?"

"Oh. You see, I…don't exactly have a father."

Screwball's smile wavered. "You never knew him?"

She understood that these things happen. Her best friend never met her father, and all she knew about him was that he had been a doctor and explorer of some sorts.

"It's not that," Mothball explained. "The changeling race works like a bee hive. You know that bees have a queen, right?"

Screwball nodded. Cheerilee had taught them about bees months ago.

"That's my mom, as you probably know. She gives birth to all the changelings, the workers, the soldiers, the nurses, the drones. That's what I meant when I said I had five thousand brothers and sisters."

"Wow," Screwball uttered. "I've always wondered what it was like not to be an only child."

He laughed. "What I would give for that! Just because I have a lot of siblings, doesn't mean we're all one big happy family! Actually, most of them hate me. I don't know if you've noticed, but I'm a bit different from other changelings."

She scooted closer to him. "Because you're a prince?"

"Well…yeah. What I mean is changelings don't usually look the way I do. They don't have hair or pupils, for example. They're more bug-like than pony-like. When Mother saw that I was 'special,' she made me heir to her throne."

"You're special? What a coincidence! I'm special too!" She blushed. "Oh, I didn't mean to brag! It's just a fact."

Mothball giggled. "I figured. I've never met a half-pony, half uh…"

"Draconequus."

"…half-drakanaka before."

She stifled a laugh. "Good try."

"Your magic is really amazing! I've never seen anything like it!"

"Please, you should see my dad's! He can turn an entire orchard into an ice skating rink!"

"Still, I bet if you looked up the word 'special' in the dictionary, there'd be a picture of your face."

"I'm sure you'd be there too."

He groaned. "The only thing that makes me special is that I look different."

"So? There's nothing wrong with being different."

"If that weren't the only reason I was Prince!" Screwball jumped back as he suddenly raised his voice. "Sorry, it just bugs me how every changeling envies me for being the queen's favorite, a position I neither deserve nor want!"

There was silence for a moment. Then Mothball suddenly felt something soft brush against him. He looked down to see a pink hoof upon his black deformed one. He then looked up at the filly it belonged to. As he did, his green eyes met her deep, purple ones.

The spirals in them seemed to go on forever.

"If you don't want it," she whispered, "you don't have to take it. Also, what you are doesn't label *who* you are. I'm the daughter of chaos, but that doesn't mean I'm going to take over Equestria one day. I'm also the daughter of the Element of Kindness, but that doesn't mean I'm Miss Nice-to-Every-Pony. I'm a little bit of both, but I'm also me."

He stared at her for a long while, not breaking contact from those infinite swirls.

"Why are you so nice to me?" he asked. "Even now when you know what I am?"

She smiled at him. "My parents taught me that no matter how frightening one may appear, every creature has a heart."

He pulled his hoof away and turned his back to her. "Not changelings."

Her smile disappeared and she looked at the colt sympathetically. "So it's true that you literally don't have a heart?"

He nodded. "Why do you think we feed off love? With no heart to keep our blood pumping, we need the love to survive, but we're incapable of feeling any love ourselves."

He turned to her as she gently laid her hoof on his shoulder. "I don't believe that."

Mothball coldly flicked her hoof away. "What do you want from me?"

She blinked. "I want to be your friend."

His head shot up and he faced her again. "Friend?"

She nodded. "If that's okay with you, of course."

The prince could not believe it. He had never had a friend before and the fact that this pretty filly was making the offer was even more astonishing. What else could he say, other than: "Sure?"

She surprised him again by flinging her hooves around his neck. It took him a while to realize she was hugging him! He felt like his stomach was literally going to explode from the affection he was receiving.

What was he doing? He was feeding off her feelings of friendship! What were to happen if it ever became more than that? He could drain her of her magnificent powers! He was probably doing that right now!

Screwball suddenly pulled away, her cheeks coloring in a fashion the prince could not help but find cute.

"You, um…" she stuttered, "w-wanna…swim?"

Mothball stared at her for another long moment and then shrugged. She smiled and reached out to touch the lake, transforming it to clear water.

The filly was still getting over the rush of feeling his sleek body. Even though it was impossible, she could have sworn that in that moment her head had been on his chest, she had heard a heartbeat.

Wow. Things did not go the way I planned but who cares?! Geez, it's getting late! I'll make this quick.

Yes, yes! Dinky's father is *exactly* who you think it is!

While writing this chapter I had "Tonight" from *West Side Story* stuck in my head! Well, it is a sort of Romeo and Juliet thing...OH NO! I've done it again!

Caught

So much for my streak. Sorry, but we're moving and we just packed out. By the way, what do you guys think: ScrewMoth or MothScrew?

"Is your talent gardening?" Dinky guessed.

The children were in the schoolyard where Apple Blossom was showing off her new cutie mark: a pink flower.

"Nope," she replied. "My talent is perfumes!"

"Huh?" every pony uttered.

"Actually, I have Thunder Dash to thank for my cutie mark. When he told me the other day that I smelled nice, I got an idea!"

Thunder blushed. "You heard that?"

"I'm glad I did! See, that morning, one of Aunt Applejack's apple pies fell on my head and that's why I had that smell! I figured I could use that smell to make a perfume!"

She opened her saddle bag and withdrew a small spray bottle. She squirted some at Lightning Dash. The pegasus grunted in annoyance but then took a whiff of herself.

"Smells good," she said bluntly.

"So why is your cutie mark a flower and not a perfume bottle?" Dinky asked.

"Because I made the perfume with apple blossoms that I had pressed in my scrapbook," Apple Blossom explained. "They had fallen off the trees before they could turn to apples. Mom says my cutie mark means I can give every pony my apple-y flowery scent!"

While every pony congratulated Apple Blossom, Screwball sat on a bench and doodle in the dirt with a stick.

"Screwball!"

The filly jumped and turned to Apple Blossom.

"Weren't you listening to my story?"

Screwball shook her head. "Sorry, Blossom. Congratulations on your cutie mark."

Her other friends had gathered round to see what she had been so occupied in.

"Since when did you become so girly?" Thunder inquired.

"What do you mean?" Screwball asked.

Lightning pointed to the dirt. It was covered in little hearts and a few big ones with the initials 'SB' and 'MB' written in them. Screwball dropped her stick. She had not realized she had been drawing all that.

"Ooh!" Dinky exclaimed. "Who's MB?"

"No pony!" Screwball insisted, using her magic to make the incriminating doodles disappear.

Apple Blossom scrutinized her face. "Wait a minute." She gasped dramatically. " *No* way! Screwy's got a crush!"

"What?! No I don't!"

"You so do! You're blushing like crazy!"

Dinky squealed. "Oh my gosh! Who is it?"

"Is he cute?"

"What color is his mane?"

"It's not Thunder Dash, is it?"

"Is it Cinnamon Stick?"

"You girls know we're standing right here, right?" Cinnamon Stick scowled.

"So spill!" Apple Blossom urged. "Who is it?"

Screwball was literally saved by the bell. As the other foals hastened inside the schoolhouse, she let out a sigh of relief.

Over the past month, she and Prince Mothball have been meeting up frequently. In those meetings, they had played, laughed and confided in each other. Neither of them had told anyone about it and it was becoming harder and harder for Screwball to keep the secret from her friends and family.

Apple Blossom was not the first to notice anything weird about her behavior. Last week, at dinner, her mother had been the one to observe Screwball's lack of appetite.

"Is everything alright, honey?" Fluttershy had asked.

The filly had not responded as she spread her mashed potatoes over her plate.

"Hmm?" Then she had returned to reality. "Oh. I'm just not hungry."

"I think I know what the problem is," her father had said, snapping his fingers and turning the potatoes into cotton candy. Then his eyes had widened at the shape she had made in her food. "Now when did you become all about hearts and kisses?"

Screwball had quickly eaten her meal and pretended like nothing had happened.

When she came home with a dreamy look in her eyes, her parents were especially suspicious.

"Tell me you also think there's something wrong with our daughter," Discord said.

"Not wrong," Fluttershy replied, shaking her head, "just peculiar."

"I'll say! When we bowled yesterday, when she knocked down the pins, they jumped back up and stood in the shape of a heart! And when she jumped in the pool, her splash was heart-shaped too! Now she's making goo-goo eyes?! What happened to my non-kissy, non-mushy little girl?"

"You mean you don't see it?"

"Don't see what?"

She put her hoof to her forehead. "Honey, I believe our daughter is experiencing her first crush."

Discord blinked. "Crush? Then that means…there's a boy?" His body was suddenly engulfed in flames. "WHO IS HE?! I'LL BURN HIM TO A CRISP IF HE THINKS HE CAN DATE MY DAUGHTER!"

He would have burnt down the entire house had Fluttershy not dumped a bucket of water on him. She made sure to always have one handy whenever he blew his top.

"Would you get a hold of yourself?" Fluttershy demanded. "This is a good thing!"

"How can it possibly be a good thing?" Discord snapped, his eyes filling with tears. "How can it be good that my little girl is growing up?" He scowled. "I'm getting to the bottom of this!"

Screwball glanced up from her homework as her dad swung the door open.

"Who is it?" he demanded.

The filly blinked. "What are you…?"

"You mother is on the crazy suspicion that you have a crush."

Screwball's cheeks turned pinker. "I…um…"

"It's not true, is it?"

She sighed in relief. "Yeah, right. No crush here!"

Discord laughed and ruffled her mane. "I knew she was just pulling my leg! To think my daughter would get all mushy over a boy!"

She smiled nervously. "Yeah. To think."

"What do you call these things again?" Mothball asked, examining the strange substance in his hooves.

"Donuts," Screwball answered with her mouth full.

"They're fantastic!"

"So you can eat whole foods?"

"Sure, but they don't usually taste very good. Chocolate is an exception. It tastes just like love."

"Oh, okay. Your turn."

After swallowing the rest of his donut, Mothball tapped his chin. They had been going back and forth with questions ever since their first meeting.

"Your unicorn friend," he said, "the one with the strange eyes? How did that happen? Was it an accident?"

Screwball shook her head. "It runs in her family. She and I were actually born on the same day and we've been best friends ever since! One year we have the birthday party at my house, the next at Dinky's and then at mine and so on."

He scratched his head. "What's a birthday party?"

She blinked. "Wow. You really need to get out more. A birthday party is a party you have to celebrate the date of your birth."

"In that case, if we had birthday parties at the hive, there'd be one every day."

Screwball snickered. "Aunt Pinkie would have a blast!"

"She's the crazy one, right?"

"You bet your tail she is! Although she's not really my aunt, she's still my favorite! She can turn any bad day around just by being herself. Plus, she gave me this cool hat!"

Mothball sighed. "You have an amazing family, even if most of them aren't related to you."

"I don't get it. Aren't there changelings your age for you to play with?"

"Well, sure, but we don't *play* , we *train* . We learn how to hunt so we can feed ourselves. I have to learn especially. Mother says if I'm going to be King, I have to find food for the hive."

Screwball glanced down and circled her hoof in the ground nervously. "Does it…hurt?"

"Does what hurt?"

"When you feed on ponies' love…do you…hurt them?"

Mothball cringed. "Well…when we drain them of their love, we drain them of their power. They slowly weaken, but…they're not hurt if we're not around them for long."

He paused and backed away from Screwball. "Maybe we shouldn't…"

The filly gasped and pointed to the sky. "Look! A shooting star!"

She closed her eyes and concentrated.

"What are you doing?" the prince asked.

"If you make a wish on a shooting star, it'll come true," she explained.

"What'd you wish for?"

She laughed. "Silly! You can't tell your wish, or else it won't come

true!"

"I fail to see how a star can possess magical wish-granting abilities."

"You're talking to an earth pony with chaotic powers."

"Fair point."

"Ooh, there's another one! This one's yours! Go on! Make a wish!"

Mothball glanced at the filly and then at the star. He thought the idea a bit silly, but he did not want to disappoint his friend. Before the star burnt out, he shut his eyes and silently made his wish: *I wish I wasn't a changeling, so I could have a heart.*

But their forbidden friendship was not to remain secret forever. Mothball was prepared to meet Screwball for a game of beach volleyball. He had made a hole in his wall leading outside, concealed by a changeling poster (the only decoration he had been aloud). He was about to lift it up when a chilling voice stopped him in his tracks:

"Going somewhere, son?"

The prince gasped and turned to face his mother. He faked a grin.

"W-what are you talking about, Mother? I was just…smoothing out this poster!"

Chrysalis chuckled. "You can cut the charade, son. I know of your secret exit, and where you've been sneaking off to the past several weeks."

Mothball gulped. There was no use hiding now that he had been caught red hoofed. He got down on his knees.

"I'm prepared for my punishment, Mother," he said, shutting his eyes with a shiver.

"Punishment?" Chrysalis said, raising an eyebrow. "You want me to

punish you for doing exactly as I told you?"

He opened his eyes and looked up at her in confusion. "What?"

"I asked you to find out whatever you could about the halfling and you have. You are quite brilliant, my son! The silly filly doesn't suspect a thing! Of course, your mission will have to be cut short."

"What do you mean?"

The queen smirked as she laid her hoof on the colt's shoulder. "You are doing so well, my son, you are ready for the next level of your training, and it will require long and tedious hours, so your little scheme will have to be put on hold."

Mothball choked at what his mother was saying. She had known what he had been doing all along and now he had to stop, but what did she mean by the 'next level' of training?

She seemed to read his thoughts. "This spawn of Discord could be more useful than I thought. She could be the key to our success! And you, my son," she lifted his chin towards her, "will be the one to turn that key in the lock."

A chill ran up his spine at the tone of her voice. "What do you mean, Mother?"

She let him go and walked to the curtain covering the entrance. "First lesson in your new level of training, son:" she grinned at him evilly, "breaking a heart."

The prince could not speak. His mother chuckled darkly.

"Go," she commanded. "Meet your little girlfriend and inform her you are unable to see her again. But don't just tell her. *Break* her! Be cruel, be cold, be vicious!"

"You…" Mothball stammered. "You…w-want me to…w-what?"

"Break the filly's fragile heart and enjoy the pleasure you'll get from it!"

"B-b-but…"

"If you don't do as I say, I will know."

His legs quivered. She *would* know. She had spies everywhere. He had been a fool to think he could sneak out unnoticed! She had only let him go so he could do her dirty work. Now she was asking him to break the beautiful heart he admired and envied and to emotionally hurt the pony it belonged to. He wanted to refuse, but how could he? He could not disobey his mother.

As Mothball approached the chocolate lake, he saw that it was surrounded by sand. Screwball stood by a net, bouncing a volleyball on her head. He smiled at her innocence and then frowned at what he had to do.

When Screwball saw her friend, she caught the ball in her hooves. "What took you so long?"

"I, um…" he stuttered. "I…had trouble sneaking out."

She shrugged. "That's okay. You want to serve first?"

Her swirly eyes sparkled with excitement. He looked away so he could avoid getting lost in them. He searched the trees for changeling scouts, but did not expect to find any, for they were masters of camouflage. He would bet his life that they were watching right now and would report to their queen on his actions.

Mothball stepped closer to Screwball, still avoiding her gaze, and took a deep breath. "We can't play volleyball tonight, Screwball."

The filly's grin wavered, but she kept it up. "Okay. We can play something else, if you'd like."

"No, Screwy…I…see…I can't play with you anymore."

This time, her smile vanished completely. "What? Why?"

His mother's words rang through his head: *Be cruel, be cold, be*

vicious!

"I…" He narrowed his eyes and lifted his chin in an uppity fashion. "I don't *want* to play with you anymore! You've…you've gotten boring!"

Screwball dropped the ball in disbelief. "Mothball, what's going on? Why are you lying to me?"

He winced. He had forgotten that she was a living lie detector. Then an idea struck him. *He* knew she could tell he was lying, but his mother did not.

"I'm not lying!" he insisted. "I've grown tired of you! It was fun for a while, but…then it became dull. And to think I risked getting into trouble for you! You're lucky no one caught me!"

Screwball's eyes widened in realization. She could sense the falseness in every word, including the last sentence. He had been caught, possibly by his mother. But why was he acting like this?

"It really is amazing I was never caught!" he continued. "I mean Mother has spies everywhere, and they don't know a thing about this!"

Another lie. Screwball understood now. They were being watched, and so he was pretending to be cruel. After a long pause, she realized she had to play along.

"Well, fine!" she snapped. "Maybe I'm tired of you too!"

Mothball was slightly taken aback, but straightened up and tried to look cold. "If we're so tired of each other, then maybe we shouldn't see each other anymore!"

"Fine with me!"

He could not tell if she had gotten his message, but the spies were watching and he had to retain his image.

"You know? You were never my friend! You're just a stupid, funny-eyed girl!"

Screwball gasped and almost struck him with a lightning bolt, but remembered it was a lie and controlled herself.

"Well…you weren't my friend either! I just liked disobeying my parents! After all, how can I be friends with a heartless monster?"

He felt a pain in his chest, but told himself she was acting. "Okay then! I'll never sneak out to see you again!"

He then turned on his hoof and took to the skies. Screwball bit her cheeks. It was the best she could do to contain her grin.

He had been lying.

Not the best chapter I've written, but transition chapters tend to lag.

Five Years Later

Sheesh-a-mundo! I am SO sorry but summer is hectic! Moving, visiting relatives and finding out they're Bronies too...

Anyway, here you go!

"Now make a wish and blow out the candles!" Pinkie Pie screeched.

The seven-layer cake sitting in front of Dinky and Screwball had thirty candles, fifteen for each of them. The party was held at Screwball's this year, and a good thing too, because there were many guests and much space was needed. Three energetic, poofy-haired fillies hovered over the birthday girls. One was blue, one a deep magenta and the third a light red.

"Quick, quick!" the blue one urged.

"Blow them out!" cried the magenta one.

"Yeah, so we can dig in!" the red one clapped.

"Blueberry, Raspberry, Cherry!" Pinkie Pie shouted, ushering the girls back into their seats. "Calm yourselves!"

Screwball looked to her friend. "You ready?"

Dinky nodded. "On three."

"One…" they counted together, "two…three!"

They inhaled simultaneously and extinguished the tiny flames while Fluttershy snapped a picture. There were cheers from every pony and a cry from a baby.

"That yours or mine?" Discord asked Applejack.

"I got this one!" Spike declared, rushing to a purple baby carriage.

He took a baby bottle out of his bag and fed it to the infant. "Here you go, little fella! There's a good little Applespike!"

It turned out that it was possible for a pony and a dragon to have a child. At a glance, the foal looked normal: an orange earth pony with green hair, until you saw his green reptilian eyes and scaly orange tail.

The young colt let out a burp, coughing up green fire. Spike only smiled.

"That's my special boy!"

Discord put his hands around the birthday girls' shoulders. "So what did you gals wish for?"

"I wished that Dinky's wish would come true," Screwball said.

"Aw, thanks, Screwy!" Dinky sniffed.

"In that case," the draconequus said, "what'd *you* wish for, Miss Doo?"

The unicorn blushed. "Uh…I wished for…muffins!"

Lightning Dash rolled her eyes. "Of course."

Discord chuckled and snapped up a plate of assorted muffins. "Here you are, but I think you should have the cake first."

"Cake, cake, cake!" the Pie triplets chanted, pounding their hooves on the table.

"Girls!" Pinkie said firmly. "That's not very polite. You know the birthday girls get the first bite of the cake! It's one of the major rules of birthday parties!"

The foals scrambled into a line as Discord cut the chocolate-frosted yellow cake.

"Uh, how many calories does this have?" asked a white unicorn filly with an elegantly coiffed blue mane. "I'm on a diet."

"Oh please," Prism groaned, rolling her eyes.

"Don't be such a party pooper, Gemstone!" Rarity laughed, patting her daughter's head. "There's nothing wrong with a little cake. Besides, you're too young to be dieting."

Gemstone was Prism's age at nine and was the daughter of Rarity and Fancy Pants. Screwball had not wanted her to come because she was so fussy, but she had rarely seen Aunt Rarity since her marriage and wherever she went, Gemstone went.

"Here you go, girls," Discord said, handing Dinky and Screwball each a slice of cake.

The latter gasped as the plate floated out of her hands and over to a high chair. There sat a gray foal with a lock of pink hair and swirly red eyes. He clapped his hooves as the cake landed in front of him.

"Zany!" Fluttershy exclaimed, swiping the dessert out of his reach. "You shouldn't be eating cake! Besides, this belongs to your sister!"

"Oh, let it go, honey," Discord chuckled. "He's only five months old and his diet already consists of chocolate."

"That's no excuse for him to steal from his own sister!"

"That's okay, Mom," Screwball assured her as she took back her cake.

When Zany had arrived, Screwball had been worried that this meant she was no longer special, but after spending time with her new baby brother, they became the best of siblings. Zany was just as crazy as she was; only he was little and had less control over his powers. It had surprised everyone that he looked like his parents when the case had not been for his sister. Then again, nothing made sense with this family.

The other guests included Rainbow Dash, Soarin and their three kids, Pinkie Pie's husband Red Shoes, Apple Blossom and her parents, Cinnamon Stick and Cinnamon Roll, and of course, Dinky's mother.

"I wish Twilight was here," Pinkie said as she chomped down on her cake. "She's missing out on the fun!"

"You know she's busy with preparations for the Grand Galloping Gala next week," Rarity reminded her.

Thunder Dash groaned. "Dad, do we have to go?"

"What's wrong with the Gala?" Soarin asked. "I thought you kids liked seeing us perform."

"But it's so…" Lightning shivered, "girly!"

"It's not as lame as it used to be," Rainbow assured her. "Aunt Scootaloo's going to be there with the other Cutie Mark Crusaders."

Prism gasped in delight. She loved Scootaloo like she was her real aunt.

"Awesome! Is she going to do any of her cool scooter tricks?"

Rainbow laughed. "We'll see."

"I can't wait to see Apple Bloom," Applejack sighed. "I haven't seen her or the others since Hearth's Warming Eve."

"They sure have been busy," Rarity said. "I mean they're performing at the biggest event in all of Canterlot! Not to mention they only just returned from their tour in Saddle Arabia."

Sometime after they had graduated from school, Apple Bloom, Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo had formed a band. Even though they had received their cutie marks long ago, the name the Cutie Mark Crusaders had stuck. Sweetie Belle was the lead singer, Scootaloo the main dancer and Apple Bloom the costume and set designer, though she still performed onstage with the others. Fortunately, Scootaloo's singing had improved since the talent show fiasco. They soon became famous all over Equestria and were greatly missed by their families and friends.

"Princess Flutterby Lily will be there too," Fluttershy pointed out. "And you all like her, don't you?"

"I guess so," Screwball mumbled. "But you still want me to wear a dress?"

"Don't be rude, honey. Rarity's making the dress for you."

"That reminds me!" Rarity exclaimed. "You two have to open your presents!"

Dinky squealed and raced towards the mountain of gifts.

It was tradition that after the double birthday party, the girls would sleepover. They especially loved Screwball's home because of all the fun rooms.

"Girls, time for bed!" Fluttershy called.

The teenagers groaned.

"Mom, we're fifteen!" Screwball insisted. "Can't we play bowl one more game?"

"Sorry, girls," the pegasus said, ushering them to Screwball's room, "but Rarity wants you all at the shop in the morning to try on your gowns."

Her daughter sighed. "Okay, Mom, we'll go to bed."

That did not necessarily mean they would sleep.

"Guess what I heard about Gold Digger!" Lightning Dash whispered once Fluttershy had shut the door.

"What?" Apple Blossom asked, sitting up from her sleeping bag.

Lightning gestured for them to move closer. "His dad told him to find a job, but the only job he was able to get was at…" she paused to snicker, "a rock farm!"

The four mares burst out laughing, but then got quiet when they heard Fluttershy's voice:

"Girls, you better not be talking!"

"No, Mom!" Screwball called. "We're doing our best to fall asleep!"

She listened with her super hearing as her mother flew to her room. "Coast is clear."

"How did Gold Digger get on a rock farm?" Dinky inquired. "His dad is the biggest businessman in town!"

"Apparently, no pony liked his personality," Lightning smirked. "I don't blame them."

"There *is* justice in the world," Screwball giggled. "My only regret is that I wasn't responsible for it."

"I can't wait for the Grand Galloping Gala," Apple Blossom sighed. "I'll bet it's going to be magical!"

This was Apple Blossom's first Gala. Children were not often invited, but because their mothers were bearers of the Elements of Harmony, and Lightning's parents both Wonderbolts, Screwball and Lightning had gone a couple times before and Screwball never went to a party without Dinky. But this year, because Apple Bloom was performing, all members of the Apple family had been invited, which meant it was going to be quite crowded.

"It's kind of dull," Screwball said flatly. "Well, until Daddy and I shake it up a bit!"

"Don't forget the Wonderbolts!" Lightning exclaimed. "You can *never* get bored watching my parents do their tricks!"

"And the food is great!" Dinky piped. "Plus, with the Cutie Mark Crusaders, this should be the best Grand Galloping Gala ever!"

"I hope so," Apple Blossom said. "I want this night to be the best night ever!"

"How so?" Lightning asked slyly. "Are you going to ask my brother to dance?"

The yellow pony blushed. "What?!"

"Come on, Blossom," Screwball said, rolling her eyes. "We all know you and Thunder have been digging on each other since the day you met!"

"I…I don't know what you're…"

"Don't even try lying to me. I'll know if you are."

"You should ask him to be your date!" Dinky suggested. "You two would look cute together!"

"I…I don't think he'd…"

"I think he would," Lightning said.

Apple Blossom blinked up at her. "You do?"

"I'm his sister. There's nothing about Thunder that I don't know."

"Oh but…I don't think I'll be able to…"

"We'll help you," Screwball assured her. "What are friends for?"

The mares went quiet as a low cackle echoed throughout the room and lightning flashed.

"If you don't go to sleep right now, you won't *have* any friends!"

Lightning, Dinky and Apple Blossom shrieked while Screwball simply rolled her eyes.

"Dad, that's not funny!"

"Don't make me get the balloons!"

She ducked under the covers. "Goodnight!"

"What's so scary about balloons?" Lightning inquired.

Her question was answered when a bunch of balloons with smiley faces surrounded them and started laughing. The girls squealed and

hid in their sleeping bags.

"Okay, okay! We'll go to sleep!"

The balloons disappeared in a flash. "Sweet dreams, girls!"

"Pssst," Dinky whispered, nudging her friend. "Screwball, are you asleep?"

Screwball groaned and sat up in bed. "Not anymore."

"I have to tell you something, and you have to Pinkie Promise to keep it a secret."

"Is it about what you *really* wished for today?"

"How did you know?"

"Dinky, I can tell when you're lying."

"Right. You still have to Pinkie Promise."

Screwball wearily made the gesture. "Cross my heart and hope to fly, stick a cupcake in my eye."

Dinky looked down at their sleeping friends on the floor and leaned toward Screwball. "I wished that Cinnamon Stick would dance with me at the Gala."

The earth pony scoffed. "I was wondering when you were going to tell me."

"You mean you know?"

"I'm your best friend, Dink. I've seen the way you look at him."

The unicorn blushed. "I'll bet you haven't seen Cinnamon Stick look at *me* the same way."

"Why wouldn't he?"

"Well…I'm not exactly…normal…"

"Dinky, his dad is a dragon. Do you really think he cares about normal? I'm going to give you the same advice I gave Apple Blossom: go for it, girl! What have you got to lose?"

Dinky sighed. "Maybe you're right, but you can't tell any pony, especially not Cinnamon Stick!"

"I won't. But *you'd* better."

"So now that I've told you my secret, can you tell me yours?"

Screwball's smile faded. "What secret?"

"I don't know." The unicorn looked toward the open window. "Maybe why you left a chocolate bar at your window?"

Panicking, Screwball made the evidence vanish from sight. "What chocolate bar?"

Dinky rolled her mismatched eyes. "Really? How stupid do you think I am?"

"You're not…" She sighed in defeat. "Fine. But *you* have to Pinkie Promise now."

Once that was done, Screwball whispered as low as she could. "You remember a few years ago, when you thought I had a special some pony?" Dinky nodded. "Well…you weren't entirely wrong."

The unicorn gasped. "Why didn't you tell me?! I'm your best friend!"

"Says the mare who didn't confide in me about *her* crush!"

"Fair point. Who is it?"

"That, I can't tell you. It's nothing personal, Dinky. It's just that if my dad found out, I'd be in big trouble, so the fewer ponies who know, the better. Anyway, he loves chocolate, so I leave some out for him in case he comes by."

"He visits you in your sleep?! Talk about a stalker!"

"It's the only way he can see me these days. His mother's…very controlling. I haven't actually seen him in a while, but if I wake up and the chocolate is gone, I know he's been here."

Dinky stared with her mouth open in wonder. "Have you…kissed?"

Screwball glanced down. "No. It wasn't anything like *that* , but…at one point I kind of…you know."

"Oh. So I guess we'd better go to sleep then."

"Huh?"

"Well, if your special some pony *does* come tonight, I don't think he'd want us to see him."

Screwball smiled. "There's not an ounce of stupidity in you, Dinky."

The two best friends slid back under the covers and closed their eyes. Before Screwball drifted to sleep, she wondered what Mothball was doing. She had not seen him since her twelfth birthday and he had been coming less and less, but he never forgot her birthday. Whatever his mother was doing to him, she was keeping him on a tight leash. She had only met the queen once, so Screwball could only imagine what she was putting the prince through.

Queen Chrysalis circled her son as he sat upright on the throne. "Now, what have we learnt about love?"

"It is weakness for the victim, but strength for us," Prince Mothball said with indifference.

"What are the Equestrians?"

"The enemy."

"And what is your duty?"

"I must find food for the hive, drain the enemy of their power, and take my rightful place as ruler of the changelings."

"And what must you do to anyone who tries to stop you?"

"I must dispose of them."

Chrysalis chuckled darkly. "You *are* ready."

"Mother, may I go hunting now? I am quite famished."

"Very well. Go, my son. Make Mummy proud!"

Once the hive was out of sight, Mothball let out a relieved sigh. He thought he would never get out of there! He had not fibbed about being hungry, but the main reason he said it was so he could see Screwball. It was her birthday and this time, he was going to let her see him. After going six months without visiting her, he was more desperate than ever!

He was over the Everfree Forest when a thought occurred to him. What if he were to accidentally feed on her, especially when his stomach was this empty? It was best to fill up first, so he changed his course toward Ponyville.

Since it was so late at night, few ponies were out and about. Mothball ducked inside an alley as his eyes followed a grey pegasus. He had much improved in his mind reading and took the form of the first stallion that appeared in the mare's mind. Sometimes, he could make out the pony's name, but all he could figure out about this one was that he was a doctor.

The minute the pegasus saw him, her eyes went wide and Mothball noticed that only one eye was directed at him.

"Doctor?" she uttered.

"Yes, Miss…" Mothball said in a peculiar accent as he searched for the mare's name. "Hooves?"

He screeched as the mare tackled him in a hug and they both fell over. She squeezed so hard, the prince was going to burst, but his

stomach was filling quickly, so he did not complain. That is, until the mare stood up and slapped him in the face.

"You've got a lot of nerve!" she cried. "Sixteen years and you don't even bother to call?!"

Mothball raised an eyebrow. "I'm…sorry?"

"Sorry doesn't make up for the sixteen years you missed out on! Do you know how hard it was not to tell any pony who Dinky's father was?!"

"I'm really…Dinky?"

The mare glanced down at her hooves. "She's…your daughter."

Mothball blinked. "You're…Dinky's mother?"

"Of course, I'm her mother! Weren't you listening? I mean how many mares have you…?"

The prince panicked. He swore he would not feed off Screwball or her friends. Did mothers of friends count? His stomach was nearly full, so it was about time he left anyway.

"Darling," he purred, standing up. "I can't stay for long."

"Oh," Derpy said. "Do you have to battle the Daleks or something?"

"The what?" He then recalled his mother's lesson to roll with anything. "Err, yes. But don't worry." He stepped forth and ran his hoof under the mare's chin, causing her to giggle. "I will return soon."

Derpy narrowed her eyes and slapped his hoof away. "That's what you said last time and sixteen years later, you show up out of the blue! You didn't even come to your daughter's birth!"

Mothball cast a spell on her, turning her disproportionate eyes green.

"I apologize, darling," he whispered. "But I really must be going.

Now, you are to head home, get some rest and forget any of this ever happened. Understand?"

Derpy nodded absent-mindedly and began her journey home. Mothball sighed and returned to the alley to remove his disguise. He despised toying with ponies' emotions, but it was his only method of survival. That poor mare had thought she was talking to her child's father, whom she had not seen for years! She had been on the verge of tears all because of him. If Screwball knew what he had become…

Screwball! He nearly forgot! He was about to take off when a vase of roses caught his eye. He was sure the owner would not miss one flower.

The flight to the chaotic castle seemed to take no time at all. Before he knew it, he was at Screwball's bedroom window. As usual, a bar of chocolate was sitting there, but that was not the first thing he noticed. He stared at the young mare's face as she slept peacefully. She looked even prettier than last he saw her. How he longed for her to open her eyes, so he could stare into infinity.

He stiffened as he heard a snore that had not come from Screwball. He looked closer to see the unicorn friend sleeping beside her. He glanced down at the floor and finally noticed two other mares in the room.

The traditional sleepover had completely slipped his mind! There was no way he was going to let her see him now. The others might wake up!

He sighed sadly as he took the bar of chocolate, replacing it with the rose.

"Happy Birthday, Screwball," the prince whispered.

He stole one more glance at her before returning to the hive.

Yeah, forgive me for that Derpy scene. I also know Twilight hasn't shown up in a while, but don't worry, she's coming soon!

To Canterlot

So I went to BronyCon and had a blast! And I finally got to see Equestria Girls! Yep, it's been a great weekend for this Pegasister!

The disadvantage to having such a large estate was that it was difficult for one to find their children anywhere. Fluttershy had been wandering around for hours before she found hers over by the duck pond.

Screwball stood over her baby brother as she covered her eyes. "Where's the baby?"

Zany giggled as he vanished from sight. His sister opened her eyes and looked around. She smiled once she spotted the infant in the tree above. She floated up to him and snatched him.

"Here he is!"

The baby laughed as Screwball tickled his tummy.

"So this is where you two have been all day!" Fluttershy exclaimed, flying up to them. "Having fun?"

"Loads!" Screwball declared. "Isn't Zany just the cutest wittle baby you've ever seen?"

Her mother chuckled as she patted the infant's head. "I'd say he's tied with you. Screwball, honey, have you packed your things? Remember, we'll be staying in Canterlot for a week."

"Oh, I did that hours ago! Mom, why can't Zany come with us?"

Fluttershy sighed and took her baby into her hooves. "We're going to be very busy, and the Grand Galloping Gala is no place for a baby. Besides, who knows what kind of magical surges Zany will get while

we're there? He might turn the ballroom to ice, the castle to gingerbread, put spiders in Princess Flutterby Lily's bed…"

"One little harmless prank and you're labeled for life! Come on, Mom! I can keep him in line. The princesses haven't even seen him yet!"

"Perhaps another time, honey, when things are less hectic."

Inside, Fluttershy was crying at the thought of leaving her precious baby boy behind. He had rarely left her sight since he was born! She would not let anyone other than Screwball or Discord handle him! She figured Applejack was feeling the same about leaving Applespike.

"I don't know about this, Granny Smith," said Applejack. "Taking care of two foals plus Wynona and the other animals can't be easy, and Applespike can be a handful!"

"And there's no telling what Zany will do!" Fluttershy exclaimed.

"Now don't y'all worry about yerr little ones!" the elderly pony assured them. "They're in good hooves here!"

"Don't forget to feed him every hour!" Applejack reminded her. "There are some sapphires in the cupboard for when he gets picky! And if ya need to burp him, point his head away from anything flammable! Oh, and don't forget his seven-hour bubble bath has to be super bubbly! And keep your hoof away from his mouth. His teeth are starting to come in."

"Ouch!" Cinnamon Roll cried out, pulling her hoof away from her baby brother's crib. "She's not kidding!"

"And make sure Zany doesn't drink too much chocolate milk," Fluttershy advised, "because then he gets hyper and his magic gets out of control! You have to read him a bedtime story and sing a lullaby, otherwise he'll never get to sleep!"

"And Applespike will make a fuss all night if he doesn't have his

binky!" Applejack insisted.

"I got it covered, hon!" Granny Smith declared. "After all, I had to take care of you, yerr brother and sister."

"That was different! Big Mac and I were practically grown up and Applespike and Zany aren't like other foals!"

"Yeah," Cinnamon Stick nodded. "Just last week, the little tyke singed my eyebrows while I was feeding him!"

"Ya see?!"

Spike chuckled as he laid a claw on his wife's shoulder. "Little Applespike will be fine, honey! I think we know by now there's nothing Granny Smith can't handle."

"What about Zany?" Fluttershy asked worriedly. "His actions are unpredictable! What if he teleports himself into the Everfree Forest and gets attacked by Timberwolves?! What if he turns invisible and can't turn back?! What if…?"

Discord clasped his claw over her mouth. "Quit worrying, dear! Nothing bad is going to happen to our baby. He *is* a Discord, after all!"

"Now come on, girls!" Spike insisted. "We're going to miss the train!"

The draconequus groaned. "For the thousandth time! I can get us all there in a second!"

"But train rides are fun!" Cinnamon Roll declared.

"But they take forever!"

"You can go ahead if you want, Dad," said Screwball, "but I want to take the train. You know, and spend alone time with Mom…"

Discord stiffened. "What are you talking about? I *love* trains!"

Cheerilee entered the house with a saddle bag on her back. "Is every pony all set to go?"

"One second," Screwball said.

She turned to Zany and made her old stuffed dragon appear in her hooves.

"Here, little bro," she said, handing it to him. "Sir Fangs-a-lot will keep you company."

The baby looked curiously at the toy and put its claw in its mouth.

"No, it's not for eating!"

She silently put a spell on Sir Fangs-a-lot, causing Zany to squeal and release it from his mouth.

"You be good, alright?" she said, rubbing his belly.

"Everything will be okay!" Fluttershy assured her son frantically. "Mommy will be home soon!"

Discord reached in and ruffled his hair, causing him to giggle. Meanwhile, Applejack and Spike were saying their final goodbyes to their baby.

"No frying any pony, ya hear?" Spike said.

"Ya really think he'll be alright?" Applejack whispered.

"He'll be fine!"

Discord had to pry Fluttershy from the crib.

"You have nothing to worry about, honey!"

"No!" she screamed. "He needs me! I have to stay with him!"

He sighed. "I didn't want to do this, but you leave me no choice."

He snapped his fingers and teleported her into his arms. She kept kicking and screaming, trying to get to her baby.

"Have fun, y'all!" Granny Smith waved before she shut the door.

When she turned around, she gasped. Zany was missing from his crib.

"Now where'd ya scamper off to?"

She heard laughter above her head and looked up to find the infant on the ceiling.

"Aw, nuggets."

"Do you have the tickets, Red?" Pinkie asked her husband at the train station.

"Let's see," the red-headed orange pony said as he dug around in his saddle bag. "They should be...huh? I seemed to have misplaced them!"

"What?!" Pinkie screeched. "Red, the train is leaving in five minutes and Twilight is expecting us and if we don't show up she'll think we've forgotten all about her and she'll forget us and I'll be such a terrible friend and..."

"Wait, I think I know where they are!"

"You do?"

"Yeah, right..." he reached behind her ear and pulled out five tickets. "...here!"

Pinkie squealed. "I *love* it when you do that!"

"How *does* he do that?" Rarity marveled, scratching her head. "He has no horn, no sleeves, no nothing!"

"When are the others going to show up?" Cherry Pie asked impatiently.

"Yeah!" Raspberry Pie demanded "Where are Thunder and Lightning and Prism and Rainbow and Soarin...?"

"And Screwball and Dinky and Cinnamon Stick...?" Blueberry Pie continued.

"And Discord and Fluttershy and...?"

"Okay, okay!" Gemstone screamed. "We get it!"

"The Apples should be coming soon," Rarity responded, "along with the Doos and the Discords. The Dashes will be arriving at the Gala with the Wonderbolts."

Spike came panting onto the platform, followed by the rest of the group. "Sorry we're late, guys, but it took a while to drag Fluttershy away from Zany."

"I just know something bad's going to happen!" Fluttershy shrieked as she struggled in Discord's grasp. "I have to go back to him!"

"Honey, he's fine!" Discord insisted. "You're getting all worked up over nothing!"

"The train for Canterlot is leaving!" the conductor called from the train. "All aboard that's going aboard!"

Twilight Sparkle paced around her room, trying to settle the worries that were swimming in her mind.

"Keep it together," she said. "So what if there's another chaotic being flying around? Screwball turned out okay, and Discord hasn't caused trouble in years!" She groaned and stomped her hoof. "Then why am I so bothered by this?!"

She thought she had sorted this out long ago! After saving her life, making her friend the happiest mare in the world and raising his powerful daughter so well, shouldn't Discord have her complete trust?

Since Screwball was born, she had feared the child would lose control and Equestria would be in a state of unrest once again! It was not that she did not love Screwball. She was her goddaughter

after all. She was a little crazy, but she was also as sweet as Fluttershy. One night, the little filly had caught Twilight in the library and had summoned a swarm of fireflies to give her light. But despite her sweet moments, there were times when things got out of hoof.

When she got angry at some pony, spiders would appear in their bed or something would fall on their head! At last year's Grand Galloping Gala, she had made the chocolate fountain explode! Twilight shivered as she recalled how the filly had turned her horn into a candy cane. It was no mystery where she had gotten that idea.

Now there was a second child of Discord. She had only seen him once at his birth, when he had made all the baby bottles in the hospital come to life. What if he turned out like his father had?

Of course, Discord was Twilight's main concern. Sure, he seemed good now, but what if he had a relapse or something? There was no predicting what he would do!

A knock brought Twilight out of her train of thought.

"Come in," she called.

Once she saw who was at the door, she stiffened. Standing there was a pegasus guard with a golden coat, blue eyes and a blue tail. He used to be taller than her, but being an alicorn for so long had increased her height and now they were at the same eye level.

At this moment, she would have preferred Discord.

For a while, neither of them said anything. They only stared at each other. Twilight tried to utter his name, but the shock muted her.

The guard shook his head and straightened up. "Twi…I mean your highness. Your friends have arrived."

Twilight snapped out of her trance and nodded. "Yes. Thank you...Flash."

She avoided his gaze as she walked out the door. She stopped when she heard his hoovesteps behind her. She turned to look at

him, her eyes demanding an explanation.

"Princess Cadence had me transferred to your guard," Flash Sentry said.

"Why?"

"She didn't say. Anyway, my duty is to you now."

She raised an eyebrow at him. "Very well. Carry on."

Twilight turned her back to him and continued on her path with her nose in the air. Flash Sentry followed her further.

"Actually, Twilight, I wanted to talk..."

"Oh, so we're back to a first name basis again?" the alicorn snapped.

"That's what I wanted to talk about."

"Well, it's a little late for that, isn't it?!"

"Maybe it wouldn't have taken so long if you hadn't ignored me for the past..."

"You'll have to excuse me. My friends are waiting."

"Twilight, why won't you listen to...?"

"Good day to you, sir."

She picked up the pace and resisted the urge to look back. That had been the first time they had spoken to each other in years.

When Twilight reached the entrance hall, the group had already met with Flutterby Lily. The youngest princess had her mother's pink coat and her father's blue mane and stood at average height. She raced up to Screwball and they did their traditional greeting:

"Sunshine, sunshine, ladybugs awake! Clap your hooves and do a little shake!"

Flutterby Lily laughed. "Have you all gotten taller?"

"Maybe," Dinky shrugged. "Or you're getting smaller."

"Rarity, Applejack, Pinkie, Fluttershy!" Twilight called as she rushed down the steps.

Her best friends greeted her with a hug.

"Geez!" Pinkie exclaimed, looking up at the alicorn. "And here Lily was saying the *kids* have gotten taller!"

Twilight gasped at the sight of Spike. "Not as much as Spike has, that's for sure!"

As she embraced her oldest friend, she was shocked to find that she went up to his neck now. It seemed like only yesterday that he had hatched out of his egg.

"I'm so glad you're all here! Come on! Lily and I will show you to your rooms."

As they trudged through the corridors, Rarity gave Twilight her usual pestering.

"Twilight, darling, there's this friend of Fancy Pants' who is around your age and..."

The alicorn groaned. "No, Rarity! I'm not getting roped into another one of your blind dates!"

"Oh but Twilight, you're the only one of us who isn't married! We just want you to be as happy as we are!"

"Rarity, I hate to say this, but alicorns are immortal. I have plenty of time to find a special some pony and I will get one when I want one!"

The unicorn sighed. "Oh, very well."

"By the way, where *is* Fancy Pants?"

Rarity's face grew whiter than usual. "He, um...has a business

conference and couldn't make it, but he might make it to the Gala."

"Hey!" Pinkie piped. "Is that Flash Sentry? Hi, Flash!"

Twilight stopped in her tracks to see the stallion in front of her. There was that awkward silence again until Flash bowed courteously.

"Your highness."

Twilight nodded. "Sir Sentry."

He then stepped out of her path and let her pass. Twilight bit her lip. It was all she could do to stop herself from crying.

So I'm currently doing an audio dramatization of Bride of Discord. An animation would be cooler, but I'll leave that to the experts. If you are interested in voice acting for this project, you can find the video explaining it on my YouTube account, which is under the same username. Auditions close September 1.

Oh, and would you believe this? Some jerk (BronyKiller1) posted Bride of Discord on FimFiction and claims it is his own! How do you like that?! I reported him, so let's hope this matter is taken care of!

Happiness and Drama at the Gala

I got so excited over the audio series that I forgot to work on the story! It's happening, by the way, and you can find info on my YouTube channel. I have a feeling this is going to turn out longer than the first story, because of all these subplots. If any of the Mane 6 seem a bit OOC, keep in mind that this is fifteen years later and they're all grown up now.

"Come on, girls!" Cinnamon Stick called from outside the ladies' dressing room. "Why won't you let me in?"

"It's not that we're embarrassed to dress in front of you," Screwball said.

"It's just we don't want you peeking!" Dinky finished.

"We want you guys to be surprised!"

"Surprised for what? I've known you girls forever!"

"Just go back to your father, Sugar!" Applejack commanded. "We'll see y'all tonight."

Cinnamon Stick sighed. "Whatever you say, Mom."

"So Screwball," Princess Flutterby Lily said as she filed the younger mare's hooves. Even though she was a princess, she liked giving her friends makeovers. "Is there a certain some pony you're taking to the dance?"

Screwball blushed. "Not really. How about you?"

"No. My last boyfriend was too arrogant. I'm sick of all these Canterlot snobs! No offense, Rarity."

"None taken," the unicorn said as she attempted to curl her daughter's mane. "Gemstone, hold still! However did you get so

many knots in here?"

"Probably from pulling at her hair too much," Cinnamon Roll snickered.

"Rarity, are you sure this hair straightener works?" Pinkie Pie asked.

"It always works for me," Rarity replied. "Why do you ask?"

"No matter how many times I straighten the Tri-Pies' manes, they become all poofy again!"

Since Pinkie thought it was silly calling her daughters 'the triplets,' she nicknamed them the 'Tri-Pies.'

"Ah!" Apple Blossom screamed.

"What is it, honey?" Cheerilee inquired.

"Look, Mom!" The filly had released her hair from her braids and held the strands up for her mother to see. "Split ends!"

Gemstone cried out in pain as her mother abruptly yanked the curler out of her mane.

"Did you say 'split ends'?" Rarity questioned.

"Wow!" Pinkie observed, taking a strand of Apple Blossom's hair. "Nasty ones, too!"

The unicorn gasped. "This is terrible! Don't worry, dear! I'll get to you as soon as I'm done with Gemstone, here."

"But Aunt Rarity, this is an emergency!" Screwball insisted. "There's a boy involved!"

Rarity gasped again and dropped the curler. "A *boy* ?! Well, why didn't you say so?!"

She grabbed a pair of scissors and hastened Apple Blossom to a seat.

"Mom!" Gemstone protested. "What about *my* hair?!"

"Oh, um..." Rarity stammered. "Fluttershy, think you can...?"

"Of course."

The pegasus went over to the unicorn filly to finish the job while Rarity snipped at Apple Blossom's mane.

"So this boy," she said, "are you two close?"

"We've been friends for a while," Apple Blossom replied with a blush.

"And he hasn't asked you out yet?! Darling, you should have called me sooner! When's the last time you combed your mane?"

"Ahem," Cheerilee coughed. "I make sure she combs her mane every day."

"Well, then messy hair must be an Apple thing."

"Hey!" Applejack cried.

"Oh, don't take it personally, darling, it's true!"

"Ouch!" Gemstone yelped. "Stop pulling so hard, you dummy!"

"Gemstone! Honestly, I don't know *where* she gets these horrid manners of hers! Probably comes from her father's side!"

"But Fancy Pants is always polite," Twilight called from under the hairdryer.

"Oh, sure he is! He's *always* polite so that when he stabs you in the back, it'll be *so* easy to forgive him after a sweet apology and...!"

"Ow!" Apple Blossom cried out as Rarity suddenly yanked the comb through her hair.

The unicorn softened once she realized her mistake. "Oh darling, I'm so sorry!"

"Is everything alright, Rarity?" Fluttershy asked.

"You seem a bit on edge," Applejack noted. "Did you and Fancy Pants get into a fight or somethin'?"

Rarity froze. "What?! Oh, no!" She gritted her teeth. "Everything's *fine* !"

"Ow!" Apple Blossom cried again.

"If everything's so *fine* ," Cheerilee said, "then please, be careful with my daughter."

The ponies decided to let the subject go and continue with their beautifying and chatting.

"You-know-who's going to love the way you'll look tonight," Screwball whispered as she styled Dinky's hair.

"Who's You-know-who?" Pinkie asked. "Voldemort?"

Derpy tilted her head. "Who?"

"It's no pony," Dinky mumbled.

The Tri-Pies popped out from behind her.

"Ooh!" Blueberry exclaimed. "Dinky's got a special some pony!"

"This is awesome!" Raspberry cheered.

"We get to throw an 'I-Love-You' party!" Cherry clapped.

"Dinky's got a boyfriend!" the three chanted. "Dinky's got a boyfriend! Dinky's got a..."

"I do not!" Dinky insisted.

"Come on, girls!" Pinkie commanded, ushering her daughters away. "Let's give her some air! Besides, we still have to shine your adorable little hooves!"

"Yippee!" Raspberry piped. "I *love* getting my hooves shined!"

"Me too!" Blueberry cheered.

"Me three!" Cherry agreed with a bounce.

Dinky sighed.

"They meant no harm, Dinks," Screwball assured her. "They're just being the Tri-Pies."

"What if he doesn't like me?" the unicorn asked with a sniff.

"Trust me. Once I'm done with you, that boy is going to be putty in your hooves!"

Discord summoned a watch on his wrist so he could check the time. "Ugh! What is taking them all so long?"

All the males were waiting at the bottom of the stairs for the girls. Ponies were piling outside, waiting to enter the Gala.

Spike shrugged. "Girls take forever to change. When you live with them all your life, you get used to it."

"Hey, Dad," Cinnamon Stick said. "How's my breath?"

"You asked me that five seconds ago. Your breath is fine, son."

"Sorry. I'm just so nervous!" The colt tugged at the collar of his tux. "Is it getting hot in here?"

"Now what's *this* all about?" Shining Armor asked.

"I think I know!" Discord exclaimed. "It's a girl, isn't it?"

"Uh..." the colt uttered. "Maybe?"

"This is going to be the night, squirt," Spike said, patting his son on the head. "You're going to walk right up to her and ask her to dance."

"Who is it we're talking about?" the draconequus asked. Then a thought occurred to him and his body engulfed in flames. "IT BETTER NOT BE MY DAUGHTER!"

"It's not, it's not!" Cinnamon Stick insisted. "Chill, dude! Literally!"

Discord simmered down. "Apologies. I don't know if you've noticed, but I can be a *teensy* bit possessive of my daughter."

"Eeyup," Big Macintosh nodded.

"Let me give you some advice, kid," Red Shoes said to the colt. "The quickest way to a mare's heart is through her funny bone."

"We're here!" Pinkie chimed from the top of the stairs.

She and her daughters were dressed in brightly colored gowns matching their coats, decorated in candy and fruit. They bounced down towards Red Shoes.

"Observe," the red-headed stallion whispered. "Pinkie, my cute little doll, you look lovely tonight! Here! I got you some flowers!"

He brought a bouquet of roses out of nowhere and handed it to his wife.

"Aw, Red!" Pinkie sighed, taking the bouquet in her hooves. "You shouldn't..."

She was cut off as the flowers blasted confetti in her face. The triplets laughed and for a moment, the males thought Pinkie was going to blow her top, but instead, she laughed along with them.

"Oh, you!" she exclaimed, punching her husband playfully in the shoulder.

"Yeah," Cinnamon Stick said. "I don't think Dinky's the type of girl whoooooo..."

He found himself stuck on that word once the rest of the girls appeared at the top of the stairs. They were all dressed beautifully, but it was Dinky who caught his attention. She was wearing a baby blue cape with matching slippers, a series of muffins embroidered along the hem of her skirt. Her light blonde hair was pulled up in a bun, sitting perfectly upon her pretty head.

As her lashes fell gracefully over her golden eyes, Cinnamon Stick felt like he was going to faint. Spike had to slap him over the head to knock him back into consciousness.

"Now's your chance!" the dragon whispered. "Go get her, Tiger!"

The colt gulped and approached the girls.

"Wow, Cinnamon Stick!" Screwball exclaimed. "You sure do look..."

"Dinky!" Cinnamon Stick squeaked. "You're...very...um...uh..." He blushed with embarrassment. "Pretty."

Dinky blushed in return. "So are you. I mean handsome! I...I..."

"Hey, uh, Dinky? Since, uh...neither of us are going with any pony..."

He looked back to his father for support. The dragon urged him on.

"Do you want to, uh...go to the Gala...together?"

Dinky gasped, not believing her ears. "Like...a date?"

"Uh, maybe?"

He squealed as the unicorn flung her forelegs around his neck. "Yes, yes, YES!"

Then she pulled away awkwardly. *Play it cool, Dinky* .

"I mean..." She took a deep breath. "Sure."

Screwball smiled as the two walked together to the ballroom. She was not even bothered about Cinnamon Stick ignoring her.

"My, my, my," Discord said, gazing down at his wife and daughter. "Aren't you ladies gorgeous?"

"You're not so bad yourself," Fluttershy said slyly. "I'm not so sure Screwball got her looks from *me* ."

"You know when you talk like that, there's no resisting you?"

As he pulled her in for a kiss, the younger fillies cringed. "EW!"

"Doesn't Apple Blossom look beautiful, darling?" Cheerilee asked Big Macintosh as she showed off their child.

"Eeyup," he agreed with a smile. "Yerr awfully pretty too!"

"There's my little girl!" Spike said as Cinnamon Roll ran up to him. "Why, there isn't a filly in Equestria prettier than..." His jaw dropped at the sight of Applejack. "Well, well, well! How much is *that* pony in the window?"

The cowgirl rolled her eyes, but gave the dragon a peck on the cheek anyway. Rarity sighed as she watched the odd couple.

"He used to say silly things like that to me all the time," she muttered.

"Who did, Mother?" Gemstone asked.

"Nevermind, sweetie."

The unicorn observed as Twilight, Cadence and Flutterby Lily received compliments from Shining Amor and as all the wives embraced and kissed their respective husbands. She had no one to greet at the bottom of the stairs.

Her attention was especially paid to Applejack and Spike. She remembered how the dragon used to treat her like a queen. Sometimes, Rarity wondered what would have happened if she had accepted his affections all those years ago, before he had chosen Applejack. Would she have been happier then?

Rarity hated it when she was jealous of one of her friends. It made her feel so horrid and selfish. Still, it pained her to see all her friends so happy while she was not. Even Twilight and Derpy seemed better off than her, and neither of them had a husband to bring them joy.

"Mother," Gemstone said, tugging on Rarity's gown. "When's Father coming?"

The adult unicorn stiffened. "He's not, dear."

"He said he would."

"But he's *not* , okay?"

"We owe it all to Rarity for making our gowns!" Twilight announced to the others.

Rarity put on a smile as her friends cheered.

"You certainly did a splendid job, Rarity," Celestia said as she and her sister joined the group. "Every filly here looks like a princess, thanks to you!"

"I do my best," Rarity replied in a cracked voice.

"Your highness!"

All heads turned at the sound of Flash Sentry, all but Twilight's.

"The guests have arrived. Should we let them in?"

"Have the Cutie Mark Crusaders arrived yet?" Celestia inquired.

"Not yet, Princess," Shining Armor said.

"They must have gotten delayed," Applejack suggested. "Traffic can get pretty hectic."

"I have a solution," Twilight declared. "Pinkie Pie, can you and Red Shoes handle the entertainment until the Crusaders get here?"

"You bet!" Pinkie chimed.

"Then open the doors," Celestia ordered.

Flash Sentry saluted the princess and took one last look at Twilight before turning to carry out the order.

"Why did you transfer him here?" Twilight whispered to Cadence as they climbed up the steps.

"Because you need to talk to him," Cadence replied sternly.

"He and I have nothing to talk about!"

"Yes, you do! You and Flash Sentry had something special, Twilight. Don't throw it all away."

"Woo hoo!" the Dash twins cheered when their parents came in for landing.

"You guys were awesome!" Lightning exclaimed.

"Bedazzling!" Thunder shouted.

"Stupendous!"

"Wonderific!"

"Amazing!"

"Super-ultra-extreme-awesome-azing!" Prism piped.

"You always put on a great show," Applejack agreed.

"Are the CMC here yet?" Rainbow asked.

"No. But wait until you see what Pinkie and Red are doin' now!"

Onstage, Red Shoes was in his magician's cape and waving his hoof over a top hat. He reached in and pulled out a fluffy blue tail.

"Hmm, that's not a rabbit's tail," he said to the audience, though he was clearly not surprised.

The tail turned out to be attached to Blueberry Pie. The audience gasped when he kept on pulling to show Blueberry lifting Raspberry by the back legs, followed by Raspberry lifting Cherry. The ponies stomped their hooves in applause.

"How does he fit them all in there?" some pony questioned.

The crowd parted as two unicorn stallions in dark suits and sunglasses pushed through.

"Alright, alright, make way!" Snips exclaimed.

"Yeah, famous rock band, coming through!" shouted Snails.

"No autographs until after the show!"

At the sight of three mares following them, Rainbow Dash, Applejack and Rarity leapt for joy.

"Apple Bloom!" Applejack cried.

Snips and Snails blocked their path.

"Sorry, no fraternizing with the stars!" Snips declared.

"They're our sisters, boys!" Apple Bloom said, stepping between them.

"If you say so, Boss! But we're watching you!"

"Yeah!" Snails agreed. "Our eyes are peeled like lemons!"

The older mares squealed as they embraced their respective sisters.

"Would y'all stop growin'?" Applejack said as she got a look at all three of them.

"Where've you guys been?" Rainbow inquired.

"We got stuck in traffic," Scootaloo explained.

"Is that little Gemstone?" Sweetie Belle asked, looking down at her niece. "She keeps getting bigger and bigger!"

"Honey," Rarity whispered. "Say hello to your Aunt Sweetie Belle, would you?"

"Charmed," Gemstone muttered.

"Thank goodness!" Princess Cadence exclaimed. "We were getting worried! Come on, girls. Let's get you set up."

Twilight smiled as she heard the Cutie Mark Crusaders play. She was still greeting guests with Princess Celestia.

"You know, you can go mingle if you want," Celestia whispered. "I can take it from here."

"No," Twilight muttered. "I'm fine."

She wanted to join in the fun, but she knew if she left her position, she might bump into a certain stallion.

"If I didn't know any better," Celestia said, "I'd say you were avoiding some pony."

"I'm not," Twilight fibbed.

The elder princess raised an eyebrow. "Don't you at least want to say hello to Rainbow Dash?"

She had her there. The purple alicorn sighed and walked down the steps to join the crowd.

On the other side of the ballroom, the Dash twins were competing on who could kick their cup the highest. In order to win, they had to catch the cup as it fell. Thunder was about to beat Lightning. He was ready to catch his cup when something caught his eye.

"Dude!" Lightning cried. "You had that one in the bag! Why'd you drop it?"

When he did not answer, she looked in the direction he was staring. There was Apple Blossom, spruced up in a sparkling orange gown, her wavy hair swinging loose over her shoulders. Lightning gave her brother a sly look and nudged him in the side.

"What?" he said, snapping out of his trance.

"What are you waiting for? Ask her to dance!"

"I...I..."

She sighed. "I didn't want to have to do this."

Lightning moved around Thunder and kicked him hard in the rear, sending him sliding across the floor. Apple Blossom turned her head upon hearing his cry, but did not have enough time to get out of the way. He collided into her and they both collapsed to the floor.

After helping her up, they stared at each other and said nothing for a while.

"Uh..." she uttered, her cheeks turning pink.

"You wanna...?" he started to ask.

She nodded. "Sure."

They smiled and made their way to the dance floor. Lightning let out a sigh of relief.

"About time! Not exactly how I planned it, though."

Over at the buffet table, Rarity was taking a sip of punch. She shrieked when a straw appeared in the glass and squirted the liquid at her. She heard a couple of snickers from under the table and lifted the cloth to find Discord and Screwball.

"Oh, that was genius, my dear!" the draconequus said to his daughter. "Did you see they look on her face?"

"Well, if you didn't, you can certainly see it now."

The two stopped laughing when they finally noticed the unicorn.

"Err," Screwball uttered, rubbing the back of her neck. "Sorry, Aunt Rarity. We were just having a bit of fun."

Rarity rolled her eyes but then smiled. "Think you can pull something on Pinkie? I want to get back at her for replacing my shampoo with mayonnaise last week!"

Screwball suppressed a giggle. "Mayonnaise in your...? I mean sure! I got an extreme whoopee cushion with her name on it!"

"Lead the way, my little abomination!" Discord laughed before they

disappeared.

Rarity shook her head. "Oh, those two."

"Rarity?"

The unicorn was taken by surprise and bumped her head on the table. She ducked out from under it and rubbed her head.

"Oh goodness! Are you hurt?"

Her eyes shot open at the all too familiar voice. Her husband was standing right in front of her. She narrowed her eyes at him.

"What are *you* doing here?"

Fancy Pants was taken aback. "Well, I *did* receive an invitation."

"That does not mean you are welcome here!"

She attempted to get around him, but he blocked her path. "I also didn't know how else to find you!"

"You didn't check Ponyville? My *hometown* !"

"I had already figured you'd gone there."

"Why didn't you come after me then?!"

He paused. "I didn't think you wanted me to. I thought you needed time to cool down. I want an explanation as to why you ran off!"

"You mean you don't *know* ?!"

"Well, your message was quite vague: *I know what you did? I never want to see you again? I'm leaving you forever? I'm taking Gemstone with me? How could you do this to me? No Longer Love, Rarity?* I don't understand! What did I do?"

Rarity stuck up her nose and turned her head. "You know *exactly* what you did!"

"No, I don't!"

"Don't play innocent with me! I saw you with... *her* !"

Fancy Pants scrunched his nose. "Her? There's no 'her.' There's only you, Rarity! To whom are you referring?"

"That wretch! That filthy little stallion-stealer! That...that... *F leur-de-lis* !"

"Fleur..." The stallion's eyes widened in realization and he let out a laugh. "Is *that* what this is all about? Darling, we only had lunch!"

"Yes. The 'old friend' you were seeing! Well, 'old friend' was certainly an understatement! Why didn't you tell me it was her?"

"Well, being the drama queen you are, if I had told you I was seeing an old *mare* friend..."

Rarity stiffened. "Drama queen! How dare you?!"

"Oh darling, I didn't..."

"Just leave me alone!"

With a huff, the angry unicorn stomped out of the ballroom and into the garden. Applejack saw the couple's spat from afar and followed her friend outside. She found her over by a rose-bush, small tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Rarity?"

The unicorn sniffed and wiped away her tears. "You saw that, didn't you?"

"Y'all were pretty loud," Applejack replied with a shrug. "I figured somethin' was goin' on between you two. Mind tellin' me what?"

Rarity looked at the cowgirl. When it came to situations of the heart, it seemed Applejack was the one to turn to. It was she who had helped her reunite with Sweetie Belle after their quarrel. Perhaps she could help her now.

"How did you get so lucky, Applejack?"

The farm girl blinked. "Whadya mean?"

"You have a loving husband who isn't even your species and three wonderful children, two of which aren't even yours and one that's in a class by himself! I don't mean to offend, but one would expect a...unique family such as yours to experience hardships! I mean your entire family consisted solely of earth ponies before you married Spike! How can you be so...happy?"

Applejack was surprised by this question. She had not given the issue much thought before.

"I guess we just love each other so much, those little things don't matter."

Rarity sighed. "Why, Applejack? Why do you have what I don't? That dragon worships the ground you walk on! He used to do that for me, but..."

"Oh, *now* I see what this is all about!" Applejack snapped angrily. "You're jealous that Spike picked *me* instead of *you* !"

"No! Applejack, that's not it at...!"

"I can't believe you! You have a family, you're rich beyond your wildest dreams and yet you're *still* a miserable little snob! There's just no pleasin' ya, is there?"

"Please, Applejack! You must listen!"

"Why don't ya go and dance with that fancy schmancy husband of yours? Or would you rather dance with *my* husband instead?!"

The cowgirl stormed inside, her face filled with disgust. Rarity hung her head.

"Well. *That* went swimmingly. Oh, Rarity, must you always say the wrong things?"

Twilight was chatting with Rainbow Dash and Soarin when some

pony tapped her on the shoulder. When she saw who it was, she turned back to her friends, but they had left her alone with him.

"Twilight..." Flash Sentry began to say.

The alicorn stuck up her nose. "Shouldn't you be on duty, soldier?"

"I need to talk to you."

"We have nothing to talk about!"

"I just want to settle what happened between us five years ago, and know why you broke up with me."

She spun around to face him. " *I* broke up with *you* ?!"

"Well, yeah! Don't you remember that day when you completely ignored me and treated me like I didn't exist?"

"What are you talking about? *You* were the one who wanted things to be professional between us! And you know what? You're right! Our relationship *should* be professional!"

Flash was about to protest, but then sighed in defeat. "If that's what you want..."

"It is. Now, return to your post at once."

"But can I just say...?"

"That's an order."

Flash nodded and obeyed.

No pony noticed the two pairs of glowing green eyes watching from the windows.

"The Grand Galloping Gala, son," Queen Chrysalis whispered. "There's romantic drama around every corner! The perfect hunting ground! But we must focus on the task at hand. You know the plan?"

Prince Mothball ceased his search and answered. "Yes, Mother."

Confused? You should be! MWAHAHAHAHA!

This was so annoying, cuz I don't have Word on this new computer yet and the program I have now doesn't have spell check!

The Mysterious Stallion

So the dude who copied my story was taken down, so all is right in the world again! Well, in the real world, anyway.

Oh, and the story "The child of chaos" being written by PortalFan626 is okay, because I gave him permission to write his own sequel to Bride of Discord.

Discord and Screwball were rolling on the floor laughing after their successful prank on Pinkie Pie. She had sat down for a second only to set off a giant whoopee cushion that mooed like a cow. She snorted along with them.

"Okay, you got me! Good one!"

Discord's laughter died down as his wife approached him.

"Up to your old mischief, I see," Fluttershy said.

He smiled nervously. "Well, I...just a little?"

"So I take it you're too busy for a dance?"

The draconequus jumped up and grabbed her hooves. "Never!"

Screwball watched as their parents glided across the dance floor. She also saw Dinky with Cinnamon Stick and Apple Blossom with Thunder Dash. Flutterby Lily was dancing with some unicorn while Rainbow and Soarin were grooving. The romance in the air made Screwball sigh.

"Can you believe they finally got together?" Lightning asked, joining her friend.

"Thunder and Blossom or Dinky and Cinnamon Stick?"

"Both! Crazy, huh?"

"Well, it was about time, don't you think?"

"Yeah. If there was some pony special in your life or mine, then this *really* would be an eventful evening!"

"Right," Screwball muttered.

"Excuse me?"

The two mares looked up at the sound of a male's voice. It belonged to a brown unicorn stallion with blue eyes and blonde hair. He held out his hoof.

"May I have this dance, Miss?"

Screwball looked around and pointed to herself. "Me?"

"But of course."

She glanced at Lightning, who mouthed, "Go on!"

"Um..." Screwball stammered. "Sure."

Her pegasus friend winked at her as the stallion led Screwball onto the dance floor. He bowed to her before pulling her in. The stallion was exceptionally light on his hooves, even when dancing on his hind legs! As he dipped her and Screwball got a glimpse of his eyes, she could not help but think there was something familiar about him.

"Have we met?"

The stallion smirked. "No, we're complete strangers."

He was lying.

"Are you sure?"

"Well, I know who *you* are."

"You do?"

"You're Screwball, daughter of Discord, the Lord of Chaos."

"Was it the eyes?"

"Actually, it was the gorgeous purple and white hair."

She raised an eyebrow.

"Okay, so it *was* the pretty lollipop eyes."

"You're just full of those, aren't you?" Screwball muttered.

The stallion chuckled. "You're as quick as you are attractive."

"You certain we've never met?"

"Hmm. We might have crossed paths once."

"Did you go to my school or something?"

"I doubt it. I was homeschooled."

"Homeschooled?" A certain someone came to mind, but she had to make sure. "What's your name?"

He leaned forward and whispered in her ear. "If I told you, you'd know I was lying."

When he moved away, his blue eyes flashed green. Screwball's pupils dilated.

"Mothball?"

He smiled. "There's no fooling you, is there?"

She opened her mouth to say something when the music stopped and Apple Bloom spoke into the microphone.

"Y'all havin' a good time?"

The audience stomped their hooves and cheered.

"Well, now we're gonna bring it down a notch! Boys, it's time to grab yerr sweethearts for a little slow dance! Take it away, Sweetie Belle!"

"Ooh!" Pinkie piped. "Can we, Red? Can we, can we, can we? It would be *so* romantic!"

Red Shoes chuckled as he took her hoof. "Anything for you, my little joy buzzer!"

Soarin looked at Rainbow Dash. "Babe, I know how you feel about slow dances, but..."

"Hey, it's no problem," she said, pulling him close.

As the music played, Screwball looked into the eyes of the stallion before her. They were not Mothball's, but that did not change the fact that he was there.

" *In a very unusual way,* " Sweetie Belle sang, " *One time, I needed you.* "

Mothball placed his hooves on his partner's shoulders and they began to sway to the music.

" *In a very unusual way,*

You were my friend. "

"I got your rose," Screwball whispered. "It was...sweet."

She remembered how thrilled she had been to see the flower on her windowsill. It got her thinking about why Mothball kept coming to see her.

The disguised prince, meanwhile, was so transfixed on Screwball's beauty. He had almost not recognized her at first, dressed in an elegant purple gown and without her propeller hat. She was even prettier than he remembered.

" *Maybe it lasted a day.* "

Her purple and white curls bounced gracefully over her shoulders.

" *Maybe it lasted an hour.* "

Her smile brought warmth to his chest.

" *But somehow it will never end.* "

And the more he gazed into those endless eyes, the more that warmth pounded inside his chest.

It was at this point in the song that Discord noticed the young couple.

"Screwball is with..." Smoke blew from his nostrils. "A *BOY* ?!"

His head was on the brink of exploding when the feeling of soft hooves against his fur calmed him down.

"Take it easy, honey," Fluttershy said gently. "They're only dancing."

"But dancing could lead to hoof holding, and hoof holding could lead to cuddling, and cuddling could lead to kissing, and kissing could lead to...!"

"Discord!"

He sighed. "You're right, you're right. I shouldn't overreact."

But he kept his eye on them as the song continued:

" *In a very unusual way,*

I think I'm in love with you.

In a very unusual way,

I want to cry. "

Mothball was so lost in Screwball's gaze that he did not realize they were floating off the ground. Screwball was not even aware she was lifting them.

" *Something inside me goes weak.* "

The prince then glanced down and shrieked.

" *Something inside me surrenders.* "

He wrapped himself around Screwball, who only giggled.

"Sorry. Sometimes I can't help myself."

" *And you're the reason why.* "

Mothball grinned awkwardly. "You never cease to amaze me."

" *You're the reason why!* "

As the song reached its climax, ponies began taking notice of the young couple in the air and watched with awe as the stallion gracefully spun the mare. Discord's teeth ground together so hard, they cracked in his mouth.

Sweetie Belle saw the couple too and sang the next verse with passion:

" *You don't know what you do to me.*

You don't have a clue!

You can't tell what it's like to be me

Looking at you. "

After bringing her up from a dip, the two locked eyes again.

" *It scares me so*

That I can hardly speak. "

At that moment, it was only them and Sweetie Belle's angelic voice.

" *In a very unusual way,*

I owe what I am to you. "

Mothball flinched as Screwball lay her head on his chest. He could feel the love transferring from her to him. It felt stronger than last they met.

" *Though at times it appears I won't stay,*

I never go. "

Reluctantly, he ran his hoof through her mane. It was as soft as cotton.

" *Special to me in my life,*

Since the first day that I met you. "

"I missed you," she whispered.

"How could I ever forget you,

Once you had touched my soul? "

He tenderly lifted her head so he could look into those eyes again. "I missed you too."

" *In a very unusual way...* "

Screwball closed her eyes and leaned forward.

" *You've made me...whole.* "

Mothball panicked once he realized what she was trying to do. He moved his head as far back as possible. When it was clear she was not going to give up, he put his hoof to her lips. Screwball opened her eyes in confusion.

"Why don't we talk outside?" he whispered.

The applause brought her back to reality. Ponies were watching. Her dad was watching. She nodded in agreement.

"Where are they going now?" Discord asked as the couple floated back to the floor.

"Does it matter?" Fluttershy responded. "I think it's sweet that Screwball's found a nice colt."

"But i *s* he nice? Does he have a sense of humor? Is he good

enough for my daughter? What's his name? Does he even *have* a name?! Why isn't Screwy introducing him to us? WHO IS THAT COLT?!"

"Honey, your temper..."

"Temper, *schmemper* ! I want answers!"

He pushed past the ponies and followed the young couple outside.

"Okay," Mothball said as he and Screwball ducked behind a bush. "I don't think any pony will find us back here. Oomph!"

Screwball tackled him in a hug.

"Where have you been all this time?"

"Can't breathe!" the prince wheezed.

"Oops." She pulled away awkwardly. "Sorry."

" *I'm* sorry. Mother rarely let me out of the hive, and when she did, she kept a close watch on me with her guards."

"How'd you slip away?"

He shrugged. "Dances are the ideal hunting grounds for changelings." He leaned forward. "Plus, I couldn't pass off a chance to see you again."

"Why didn't you tell me it was you in the first place?"

"I was afraid someone might hear."

"Well, it's good to see you."

After a long pause, the gap between them diminished. Once Mothball saw this, he instantly drew back.

"Screwball, you can't!"

She scowled at him. "Why not?"

"Do you know what happens when you kiss a changeling?"

"No, but I'm about to find out."

He stopped her next attempt with his hoof. "Screwy, a changeling's kiss is very dangerous and can be life threatening! If I kiss you, I'll drain all the power from you like a sponge! It's bad enough that you're sitting so close to me!"

She crossed her forelegs. "How is that *bad* ?!"

"I don't want to hurt you! Okay?"

She groaned in annoyance. "Fine. But...you know you don't have to hide from me?"

Mothball sighed. "Screwball, someone might see..."

"I don't care! I want to see the real you! Please!"

"Well...alright."

He took a deep breath and his body erupted into green flames, transforming him to his changeling self. His hair was longer, he was a few inches taller than her, and his muscles had developed. Any other pony would have found the sight of him terrifying, but not Screwball. In her eyes, he was the most handsome stallion in all of Equestria.

Mothball could feel her emotions growing by the second. How could some pony possess such intense feelings for him?

Neither of them heard Discord sneaking around the garden, frantically searching for his daughter. He heard a pair of voices and followed them to a bush. He peered over the edge in time to see the mysterious stallion change form.

He was so overcome with shock that he was frozen in place! He expected his daughter to do the smart thing and run away, but she did not! Instead, she raised her hoof to touch the wretched

creature's face!

He snapped out of his trance and growled as he recognized the changeling. Screwball and Mothball jumped back as he popped out of the bush.

"YOU!" he bellowed.

"Daddy, wait!" Screwball exclaimed.

Mothball was about to run when Discord grabbed him by the tail. He tried to struggle, but the draconequus had paralyzed him with his magic.

"I WARNED YOU TO STAY AWAY FROM MY DAUGHTER!" Discord shouted at a volume that could be heard from the ballroom.

Many ponies rushed out to the garden to see what the commotion was, including Fluttershy and her friends, Screwball's friends and the princesses.

"Ah!" Cinnamon Roll screamed. "A changeling!"

"Oh!" Gemstone cried. "It's so *horrid* !"

Had Mothball been able to move, he would have winced at that comment.

"Daddy, put him down!" Screwball pleaded. "It's not what you think!"

"Stay back, Screwball!" Discord commanded. "This insect has fed enough on you!"

His eyes literally burned with anger, making Screwball gasp. "Daddy, don't!"

Without thinking, she used her magic to blast her father into a tree. As he cried out in pain, his spell on Mothball broke.

"Go!" Screwball said to him. "Get out of here!"

The prince did not waste a second and vanished.

Fluttershy flew to her husband's side and tenderly stroked his head.

"Are you alright?"

She jumped as he suddenly sat up. He crossed his arms and glared disapprovingly at his daughter. Screwball made the mistake of glancing at the horrified crowd of ponies. Her friends' jaws had dropped to the floor and they were all staring at her in disbelief.

Screwball looked back at her father and hung her head in shame.

"You," Discord grunted, "have a *lot* of explaining to do, young lady!"

I do not own the lyrics of the song "Unusual Way," nor have I seen the movie *Nine* , but I heard this song and thought it fit ScrewMoth perfectly!

And yes, the dancing scene was partly inspired by *Casper* .

Fights

This chapter, mix of *The Lion King 2, The Little Mermaid* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame 2* . Basically a whole bunch of Disney-inspired stuff.

Discord paced around Screwball's bedroom, trying to control his frustration. His daughter sat on the bed, glaring down at her hooves while Fluttershy stood a safe distance away from them both.

"I'm a reasonable father!" Discord ranted. "I let you bend reality, I let you stay up late, I let you eat dessert before dinner! I never ask for much! Yet the one rule I make, the one thing I tell you *not* to do, you go out and break!"

"Daddy, you don't understand..." Screwball started to say.

"Did you *know* who that stallion was?"

"I..."

" *Did* you?!"

She hung her head. "Yes."

He crossed his arms. "How long have you been seeing that boy?"

Screwball looked away.

"How many times do I have to tell you?! Changelings are dangerous! You can't trust them, especially *that* one!"

"You don't even know him!" his daughter spat.

"Yeah? Well, like mother, like son! All changelings are the same: heartless, cold, hideous monsters!"

"You're the one to talk!"

"What?!"

Screwball covered her mouth while Fluttershy gasped in horror. Discord narrowed his eyes at his daughter.

"Oh," he growled. "Oh! So *that's* the way you're gonna play it, eh, missy?! Yes! I'm hideous! But at least *I* have a heart! Changelings are incapable of any..."

"Daddy, I *love* him!"

The only sound that could be heard was another gasp from Fluttershy. Discord's eyes grew to the size of frying pans.

"No," he uttered. "Have you lost your senses?! He's a changeling!"

"I don't care!" Screwball said defiantly.

"Can't you see he's bewitched you?! Can't you see he's feeding off your emotions?! He's only using you! A creature like that cannot love!"

The young mare could not take it anymore and hopped off the bed. "You're such a hypocrite!"

She raced toward the door.

"I'm not finished with you, young lady!" Discord bellowed.

"Well, *I'm* finished!"

As she threw the door open with her magic, she heard some shouts. Behind the door were the Tri-Pies and Prism. Screwball ignored them and ran sobbing down the hall.

"Screwball Fluttershy Draconequus!" Discord shouted. "You come back here this instant!"

"Discord!" Fluttershy said sternly, laying her hoof on his shoulder. "I think you might have been too hard on her."

"Too hard on her?!" the draconequus repeated. "She deliberately

disobeyed me! On top of that, she used her magic against me and called me a heartless monster! A hypocritical one at that!"

"But Discord, don't you see?"

"Don't I see *what* ?"

"This is precisely how I was treated when I fell in love with you!"

The draconequus grew silent. He tried to find a proper response, but he found none.

"Our daughter's right," Fluttershy declared. "You *are* a hypocrite! You forbid Screwball from falling in love with a changeling, when the world forbade *me* from falling in love with *you* !"

"That was different!" Discord insisted. "I loved you back! Changelings are incapable of love! They say they care for you, but once their hunger is satisfied, they stab you in the back!"

"Honey, I know you're probably too upset to discuss this, but exactly what happened between you and Chrysalis that made you enemies?"

He sighed. "It was a long time ago, when I was just a kid alone in the wild. I met Chryssy, err, Chrysalis when she was just a princess. Even at that age, she was devious! She did not seem to mind my appearance and she said she was my friend. I told her I was looking for a home, and she told me of this land where creatures of all kinds are accepted."

"Equestria?" Fluttershy guessed.

"You got it. Well, she was clearly *wrong* ! But that's not what ticked me off! Years later, when I took over Equestria, newly crowned Chrysalis and her changelings took advantage of my disorder and fed off the ponies!"

He looked at his wife sincerely. "She *used* me! She sent me to Equestria, knowing the ponies would reject me and make me so mad that I would take over so *she* wouldn't have to do it herself!"

"Are you sure that's what happened?"

"Oh, I'm sure! She wasn't the least bit modest when she came to my lair to *gloat* about it!"

He groaned and collapsed on the bed. "I wish Screwball would just realize that I don't want her to get hurt! And I certainly don't want her to face the same..."

"Shhh," Fluttershy whispered, stroking his head. "What happened with Chrysalis is all in the past now. Maybe her son is different."

"How could you possibly know that?" Discord huffed.

"I don't, but seventeen years ago, I met someone whom every pony thought was a monster. I thought he was a monster too, until I got to know him better. A year later, I married him, and have been happy ever since."

"But those changelings...they're evil!"

"You were evil too, weren't you?"

"Yes, but..."

"And you changed, didn't you?"

"I did, but..."

"Well, what made you change?"

He looked up at her. After all these years, she was still the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. Of course, he had cast an eternal youth spell on her not long after their wedding, so she did not look any different.

"You."

Fluttershy smiled. "Because you fell in love with me."

He sat up. "It was more than that. You were my everything! My life was incomplete without you in it!" He reached out to caress her

cheek. "I would give up my power for you!"

"Then don't you think Prince Mothball could feel the same about Screwball?"

He stiffened. "I...I..." He sighed heavily. "Maybe you're right, but...you can't be too careful. I suppose I should go talk to her."

Fluttershy shook her head. "Give her a moment to calm down."

Screwball did not know where else to go. She instantly teleported to her sanctuary. Her first instinct was to sob into her hooves.

Why could her father not understand? He was always supportive with everything else she did. Even though she knew he would never allow her to see Mothball, it never seemed to matter until now. Now that he had figured out her secret, he was going to make sure she never left his sight again. It would be only a matter of minutes before he found her.

"I thought you'd be here."

Huh. Sooner than I thought.

"Go away!" she shouted.

"Huh?"

Screwball did a double take and realized it was not her dad's voice. She turned around to see Mothball. She quickly cast a spell to fix her hair and makeup.

"Sorry," she apologized. "I thought you were my dad. What are you doing here?"

He took a step forth. "I came to see if you were okay."

"Yeah, I'm fine. It's just...Daddy and I got into a fight."

"Oh. I guess that's my fault."

"No. I was the one who told you to change into yourself. I'm also the one who threw my dad into a tree. You know I've never used magic on him before? We've always been so close and never fought." She sighed. "I guess it was bound to happen at some point."

She hung her head and was silent for a while. Mothball cautiously approached and sat down beside her.

"So how have things been? You know, other than trouble with the parents."

Screwball sniffed. "Okay, I guess." She smiled a bit. "I have a baby brother now."

The changeling raised his eyebrows. "A *brother* ?"

"Yeah, his name is Zany. He's the cutest baby you'll ever see!"

"Does he, um...do the things you do? I mean can he do magic?"

She nodded. "Though he has trouble controlling it. I can't wait until he's older! That way, we can play catch together and I can show him my wicked curve ball!"

"How old is he now?"

"Five months."

"What about your friends? How are they doing?"

"Dinky and Cinnamon Stick got together at the dance, so did Thunder and Apple Blossom. I think..." She scooted closer to him. "A lot of ponies got up the courage tonight to..." She touched his hoof with hers. "Tell the pony they liked that they...well..."

She did not need to say anything. Mothball could feel her emotion. Things were going according to plan. All he had to do was pretend he returned her affections and wriggle more information out of her. It is what his mother would want. But it was not what *he* wanted.

He pulled his hoof away. "Screwball, you can't! You can't have feelings for a changeling! You can't love something that has no heart

to love you back with!"

Screwball looked at him seriously. "Why do you not see what I see?"

"See what?"

"This!"

She took his hoof again and this time placed it over his chest.

"Feel that?"

Something inside his chest was pumping rapidly.

"That's a heartbeat," Screwball stated.

Mothball stared at her in disbelief and then shook his head.

"That's impossible," he murmured. "I'm not *supposed* to have a heart! I'm exactly what your father says: cold, unfeeling..."

"If you're so cold and unfeeling, then why haven't you sucked me dry yet?"

"Because...because..."

He could not think of a reason, for there were too many candidates: *because I don't want to hurt you, because I'm supposed to keep you alive, because I think you're really pretty...*

He chose the safest one:

"You're the only friend I've ever had."

As she smiled, Mothball could have sworn he heard music. He figured it was his imagination until fireflies surrounded them in a heart-shaped pattern. Screwball batted her purple eyes innocently.

"Sorry," she said. "When I get emotional, I get a little carried away."

Exactly who is the seducer here?

Once again, he found himself lost in those hypnotic swirls. He did

not know if it was her magic, or if her eyes truly sparkled. He almost did not realize she was leaning in, until her lips were inches away from his.

He wrenched himself away and the spell was broken.

"Did you not hear my warning?!" he snapped.

Screwball pouted. "I don't care!"

"You should! Do you think I would be able to live with myself if I hurt...?"

He paused, shocked at the words falling from his mouth. Screwball was equally surprised, not by his words, but by his frightened tone. Mothball decided he should get out of here before he gave her the wrong idea and so he could sort out this strange thumping inside him.

"You should go home," he said quickly.

Screwball blinked. "What?"

"Your family's probably worried sick about you."

She sighed. "I guess you're right. I'm in enough trouble as it is. Will I see you again?"

Mothball looked away. "I wouldn't get your hopes up."

"But..."

"For your own safety, Screwy, I think it's best you stay away."

It pained him to say it even more than it had the first time he had left. This time, it was for real, and Screwball knew he was not lying. He heard a sniff and resisted the urge to look at her, knowing those beautiful eyes were filling up with tears.

"Goodbye," he muttered.

Mothball took off before he could change his mind. Screwball's ears

drooped as she began crying for the second time that evening.

She did not want to go back to Canterlot, but she felt she had no choice. Her parents would flip if she did not return soon.

"Any sign of her?" Fluttershy asked her friends.

Applejack shook her head. "We've looked everywhere!"

Discord was growing nervous. "You don't think she ran away, do you?"

When Screwball materialized in front of him, he breathed a sigh of relief.

"Oh, thank Celestia!"

"Where have you been, young lady?" Fluttershy demanded, crossing her hooves.

"I was just getting some air," Screwball mumbled, not making eye contact with any pony.

"Screwy, I want to talk about..." her father started to say.

She turned his back to him. "I don't want to talk now. I just wanna go to bed."

Discord scowled. "How dare you turn your back on me?! You come back here, or I'll..."

"Let her go, honey," Fluttershy said, taking his paw in her hooves. "It's been a long night. She needs some rest."

"We could all use some rest," Twilight declared.

The others agreed and departed for their bedrooms, all except Rarity. She tapped the yellow pegasus on the shoulder.

"Fluttershy, may I speak with you?"

Fluttershy looked to her husband. After the family dispute, Discord needed her especially now, but Rarity's expression was desperate.

"This will only take a moment, dear."

The draconequus nodded solemnly and left the two mares alone.

"How do you make it work?" Rarity asked suddenly.

Fluttershy's eyes widened. "What do you mean?"

"Your marriage. It *can't* be easy! I mean don't you two ever fight?"

"But of course. Married couples get into fights all the time."

"Then how are you still together?"

"The thing with fights is that we argue about what is bothering us and after the fight, we try to fix it. If we never talk about our problems with each other, how will one know what's troubling the other?"

"But..." Rarity stammered. "Don't most marriages end because of...a fight?"

Fluttershy shook her head. "Fights are normal. Of course, I wouldn't know, but I think marriages break up due to a *lack* of a fight."

"Fancy Pants and I never fought, until..."

The unicorn trailed off, which caught Fluttershy's attention.

"Until what? Rarity, you can tell me anything. Whatever it is, I won't talk about it with anyone. Cross my heart and hope to fly, stick a cupcake in my eye."

Rarity smiled a little and took a deep breath. "I caught Fancy Pants with another mare."

Fluttershy gasped. "What? When?"

The whole story came pouring out. "A few days before Screwball and Dinky's birthday, Fancy Pants told me he was going out to lunch with a friend. Then while I was shopping, Upper Crust said she saw

him at the café with his old marefriend, Fleur-de-lils! I tried telling myself it was only a casual meal, but I was curious and asked Upper Crust to lead me to them! When we got there, her filthy hooves were all over him! In public, nonetheless!

"Humiliated and hurt, I rushed home, packed my things, left Fancy Pants a note, picked Gemstone up from her piano lessons and hopped on the next train to Ponyville!"

As tears sprung in Rarity's eyes, the pegasus stood speechless. She tried to process Fancy Pants ever doing such a thing. He was always such a gentlecolt to all of them.

"Maybe it isn't what you think," Fluttershy suggested.

"And what if it *is* ?" Rarity snapped.

"Did you even *talk* to Fancy Pants about this?"

"Well, I...no. I was just so upset, I *couldn't* talk to him! I haven't even told Gemstone about it!"

"Then how do you know that's what happened?"

The unicorn said nothing.

"Look, I won't say anything, but you should not leave something like this unsaid, especially to Fancy Pants. If you don't discuss this matter with him, it will never be resolved."

Rarity looked her friend in the eye. "You're right. I shouldn't hold my anger in. I must speak with Fancy Pants. I suppose that means I should throw those divorce papers away."

Fluttershy grinned. "That's good, Rarity."

"But...I need to sleep on it. Thank you, Fluttershy. You really are the best friend a pony could ever have."

Twilight did not mean to eavesdrop. She had returned to ask Fluttershy about the changeling when she overheard the conversation with Rarity. It got the unicorn thinking about her

situation with Flash. They never really talked about what happened five years ago. Perhaps it was time they did.

She was also thinking about what had occurred with Screwball and the changeling, whom Discord had claimed was Queen Chrysalis' heir. Screwball had turned against her father to defend the boy. Twilight wanted to know why.

When Mothball arrived at the hive, his mother was waiting.

"What did you find out from the halfling?" she asked.

The prince turned away from her. "I don't want a part of this anymore, Mother."

Queen Chyrsalis narrowed her eyes. "What did you say?"

"I *said* I don't want a part of this anymore!"

The elder changeling gritted her teeth. "Are you disagreeing with me?"

Mothball faced her defiantly. "Maybe I am. What are you going to do about it?"

Furious, her horn glowed green as she blasted a beam at him, sticking him to the wall.

"No one defies me!" Chrysalis bellowed, stepping toward him. "Especially my own son! Now tell me what you know!"

Mothball was scared out of his wits. He had never stood up to his mother before, nor had she ever used force on him! Nevertheless, he kept his courage.

"I don't care what you do to me! Why can't you just leave that family alone?"

Chrysalis growled. "I should have known you'd be too weak for the task!" Then she smirked. "And I know precisely what makes you

weak. That halfling, she's something of...value to you, is she not?"

Mothball froze in fear, causing Chrysalis to grin in triumph.

"I see she is. If I cannot get information from you, I could always go straight to the source."

"No!" he protested. "You can't! Please, don't hurt her!"

"You don't want her hurt?" the queen chuckled. "Then tell me what I need to know."

Dun dun DUUUUUN!

A Lesson in Friendship

Cookies to whoever can spot the *Harry Potter* reference in here! I'm going to try to finish this before I have to go to college.

Dinky, Cinnamon Stick, Apple Blossom and the twins stood outside Screwball's bedroom.

"Go ahead," Lightning said, nudging her brother. "Knock."

"I'm not knocking," Thunder insisted. " *You* knock!"

"No, *you* knock!"

" *You* knock!"

"Fine! Cinnamon Stick, *you* knock!"

"No way!" the earth colt declared. "I'm not crazy to go near her when she's in this state!"

"My coz is right," Apple Blossom agreed. "Suppose we get her upset and she loses it? She went through a lot yesterday. Maybe only one of us should go in."

"I'll go," Dinky volunteered. "She's my best friend."

No pony ever argued whenever Dinky said that, knowing that the two of them were closer than bread and butter. The unicorn was about to knock on the door when Cinnamon Stick stopped her hoof.

"Be careful," he whispered.

Dinky nodded and knocked.

"Go away!" Screwball screamed from inside.

"Screwy, it's Dinky! May I come in?"

There was a pause. "Just you."

The door opened automatically for Dinky to step inside. The room was completely dark and silent, save for Screwball's sobbing and the twittering of three sparrows circling her. Dinky raised an eyebrow at them questioningly.

"They're for moral support," her friend stated.

"Right."

Dinky climbed onto the bed and carefully lay her hoof on Screwball's head. "You okay?"

"Do I *look* okay?!"

The unicorn jumped back at her tone. Screwball sighed as she rolled onto her back and sat up.

"Sorry, Dinks. I've just had a bad day."

"I understand," Dinky nodded. "The Tri-Pies told us about your fight with your dad."

"Those tattletale triplets," Screwball muttered under her breath.

"Every pony fights with their parents now and then."

"But that's the first time I fought with *Dad* ! I mean Mom's gotten sore at me several times before, but not Dad! We never had anything to argue about until now!"

She buried her face in her knees. Dinky patted her on the head.

"The Tri-Pies told me he was hard on you."

"What else did they tell you?" Screwball asked, not looking up.

The unicorn bit her lip. "Well...I don't know if they were just talking crazy like they normally do, but they said that...you were, um...dating that changeling?"

This time, Screwball did look up. "It's true, okay?!"

Dinky's eyes widened. "Was he the special some pony you were talking about?"

"Yes."

"Wow. You weren't kidding when you said your dad would get mad."

Screwball had expected a scream. "You don't mind?"

"Screwy, my best friend's the Princess of Chaos, my boyfriend's dad is a dragon, my eyes look in opposite directions. I'm used to weird stuff."

The earth pony giggled. "Well, yeah, but...changelings are supposed to be evil."

Dinky shrugged. "So is your dad."

Screwball smiled and hugged her friend. "I knew you'd understand, Dinky! What do the others think?"

"Oh, they freaked out when the Tri-Pies told us. Guess it makes sense, since their parents did use to battle changelings."

"But not Mothball. He wasn't even born yet."

"Mothball? Is that his name? Hey! *Screw* ball? *Moth* ball? It's like you were meant for each other! Hey! I have an idea! You could run away together! It would be *so* romantic!"

"Yeah. It's a little more complicated than that, Dinky."

"How so?"

"For starters, he's the *prince* of the changelings."

Dinky gasped. "Wow! He's a prince even!"

"You don't get it, Dinky! He's heir to Chrysalis' throne! Queen Chrysalis is his *mother* !"

"Well, no offense, but your family's rep isn't perfect either."

"Second, Mothball doesn't believe he has a heart."

"That's silly! Every pony has a heart! Some have two, Mommy says."

"But changelings aren't supposed to have hearts. Dad thinks Mothball's just leading me on."

"Then why does he keep coming to your window? By the way, I saw the rose."

Screwball sighed. "Of course, you did."

"Hey, everything will be okay. Things will work out with your parents and you and Mothball will live happily ever after!"

The earth pony shook her head. "Dinky, face it. You may be my best friend, but you can be really naïve sometimes."

"Exactly!" Dinky exclaimed, flinging her foreleg around Screwball's shoulders. "Which is why you have my support the whole way!"

Screwball grinned. "Thanks, Dinky. You know how Gold Digger and Silver Tray used to say I would become evil and have to be turned to stone? I don't see how that can happen when I have a friend like you."

"You know what they say!"

"Friends to the end!" they said together.

"Move over!" Lightning whispered harshly, shoving her brother away from the keyhole. "I want a look!"

"Guys, we shouldn't be doing this!" Cinnamon Stick insisted.

"Aren't you worried that your girlfriend might accidentally get turned into an orange?"

"Come on! Screwball would *never* hurt Dinky!"

"What are they doing now?" Apple Blossom asked.

Lightning was about to answer when Thunder regained control of the keyhole. "They're hugging! That must be a good sign."

"And what are you little ponies up to?"

The four jumped at the sound of Twilight Sparkle's voice.

"We're not little," Thunder grumbled. "We're fifteen."

Lightning nudged him in the side and whispered, "Show some respect." She looked up at the alicorn. "Dinky went to comfort Screwball and we were spying, err, making sure they were okay."

"I tried to talk them out of it," Cinnamon Stick said.

"Didn't your parents teach you that it's rude to eavesdrop?" Twilight inquired.

The twins hung their heads. "Yes, Aunt Twilight."

"Good. Why don't you all join the others for breakfast? I need to speak with my god-daughter."

The teenagers knew best not to argue with a princess. Twilight knocked on the door, startling the two mares inside.

"Yes?" Screwball called.

"Screwy, it's your Aunt Twilight."

"Oh. Come in."

The alicorn opened the door. Dinky bowed her head as a force of habit.

"Dinky," Twilight spoke softly, "I need to speak with Screwball alone. They're serving muffins in the dining hall."

The gray unicorn nodded and left the two alone.

"Am I still in trouble?" Screwball asked.

Instead of answering her question, Twilight simply said, "Follow me."

Screwball had learned long ago that when grown-ups are this ominous, it was wise to listen to them. She put on her propeller hat for good luck before following her godmother.

Twilight led her to a long hallway decorated in colorful stained-glass windows.

"Have you ever been to this part of the castle?" the alicorn asked.

Screwball shook her head. "Never."

"I'm not surprised. It's not exactly your father's *favorite* wing."

The first window she saw had an image of Discord. "What is this place exactly?"

"This is the hallway leading to the Canterlot Tower, where we keep the Elements of Harmony. The images you see here are moments in history when the Elements were used, along with many other victories."

Screwball counted at least five windows in which her father was depicted. There was one particularly unsettling one showing her father treating a unicorn, a pegasus and an earth pony like marionettes as he dangled them over a fire. The one next to it showed two alicorns circling a white version of her father. She soon deduced that it was Princesses Celestia and Luna turning Discord to stone.

Twilight saw the horrified expression on the filly's face and felt guilty for showing her this.

"You must understand that your father was out of control then. That was before..."

She guided her to another window, one that was more pleasant. Her father was in this one as well, but so was a yellow pegasus with flowing pink hair. They were running in a field and both looking happy.

"Mom and Dad."

"Beauty tamed the beast," Twilight said with a nod. "Your mother saved Equestria with her Element of Kindness alone. In a way, she saved your father as well."

Screwball stared at the window of her parents for a moment and then looked around at the others. There was one of six ponies battling a dark alicorn. She recognized the heroes as her mother and five aunts.

"That was the battle against Nightmare Moon," Twilight explained.

"Oh," Screwball said, remembering the story.

"That's how we all met. If you think about it, if the six of us had not recovered the Elements of Harmony that night, we would not have faced Discord a year later, and your parents probably would not have met."

Screwball pointed to the next window. "Is that Uncle Spike?"

Twilight chuckled. "Yes. That was our victory in the Crystal Empire."

"Hey! That's Cadence up there!" She looked at a pink window beside it. "There she is again with Shining Armor!"

"Oh, yes. That was when the two of them used their love to defeat the..."

Twilight trailed off, but Screwball already knew what she was going to say.

"The changelings?"

The alicorn sighed and nodded solemnly. "Screwball, the reason I brought you here is because there is a chance you could be on one of these windows someday. Whether you are depicted as a hero or a villain is up to you."

Screwball's eyes widened as she stared at her godmother. "You think I'm going to turn evil, don't you?"

"All I know is that you have great power, Screwball, and with great

power comes great responsibility. Need I remind you of the story of Nightmare Moon?"

"No, but I have a feeling you're going to remind me anyway."

"Princess Luna was always a good ruler, but there was jealousy and darkness in her heart that took control of her a few times. You are like a daughter to me, Screwball, and I do not want something like that to happen to you."

"It won't!" Screwball insisted. "Why would I ever...?"

"Last night, you lost control of your emotions and used magic against your father."

The younger mare hung her head. "Oh, that. But he was going to hurt Mothball!"

"Mothball? Oh yes, the changeling prince. If you don't mind me asking, how do you know him?"

"Well, um...we kind of met as kids and...we became friends and..."

"You are aware that changelings physically have no hearts?"

"I know, I know! But he's different! I've felt his heartbeat, I swear! Are you going to tell me to stay away from him too?"

"Personally, and regretfully, I agree with your father. Changelings are too dangerous for a young filly like you to be dealing with."

"I'm fifteen!"

"I'm saying this from experience. It is in a changeling's nature to toy with ponies' emotions. If this prince is truly your friend as he says, I have no right to lecture you, but...you must be careful."

"You know I can tell when ponies are lying, and he hasn't lied to me about being my friend!"

"Are you sure?"

"Positive!"

Twilight sighed. "Well, the choice is yours to make. Before you go, there is one lesson I have left to teach you today."

"Yeah?"

"What do most of these windows have in common, other than the Elements of Harmony?"

Screwball rubbed her chin. "In all of them, a bad guy was defeated?"

"Yes, but how were they defeated? This includes your mother's taming of Discord."

"Oh, that. Mom said it was the Magic of Friends?"

"Technically, it's the Magic of *Friendship* , but yes. It may sound cheesy, but friendship is one of the most powerful forms of magic. The only thing more powerful was what saved your father."

"My mom?"

"And what did your mother offer him?"

Screwball glanced back at the window of her parents. "Love?"

"Exactly. *True* love between two creatures is the greatest magic you'll ever find. You may be a being of chaos, Screwball, but there is a chance you hold such magic in your heart. Never lose sight of it, okay?"

Screwball was a little confused, but then again, Twilight often confused her. She nodded anyway.

"Good," the alicorn said with a smile. "You going to breakfast?"

"No, thanks," the filly said. "I'll just eat in my room."

Twilight watched Screwball go with a sigh, wondering if the young mare had understood her lesson. Whenever she had the chance, she would teach Screwball control of her magic and the importance

of friendship, hoping it would lead her down the right path. Considering how many friends she had, it seemed there was nothing to worry about.

But now that Screwball was friends with a changeling, and she suspected more, Twilight feared for the young mare. She had a choice between family and love, and that's a decision no pony should ever be forced to make.

It was quiet in the Discord household. Not even the baby was up to his usual antics. Discord sat pouting on the couch, his head in his hands. Fluttershy flew up to him and patted his head.

"What's wrong, honey?"

He looked at his wife sadly. "Screwball hasn't spoken to me in over a week, ever since our fight. She does nothing but sit in her room with the baby!"

"She'll come around soon enough. Or do you want me to use the Stare on her?"

He sighed. "No. I'll talk with her myself."

As if on cue, the door to Screwball's room opened and the filly floated out with her brother in her hooves.

"Mom," she said. "Can I take Zany for a walk in the park? I think we need some fresh air."

Actually, it was mostly her that needed air. She had been feeling very grimy lately.

"But of course, sweetie," Fluttershy said. "I would go with you, but I'm meeting Rarity at the spa."

"What's she doing in Ponyville, anyway?"

"Trouble at home. That's all I can tell you."

Screwball looked at her father for a moment. He opened his mouth to say something, but she placed Zany in a baby buggy and rushed out the door before he could.

"What's the use?" Discord groaned. "Even if I manage to get a word in with her, she's not going to talk back!"

"Then it's time we put our hooves down!" Fluttershy declared. "We'll sort out everything tonight at dinner. Sound good?"

"I guess."

"Okay, I have to go now." She kissed him on the snout. "I love you."

Her kiss made him grin a little. "I love you too."

Mothball sunk into his bed. All exits were guarded, including the secret one. He had been confined to this room for over a week and had contemplated his escape ever since. Any moment now, his mother would carry out her plot! She thought he did not know about the new phase, but he had heard it from some foolish drones gloating outside his room.

He had to get out of here and warn Screwball! She and her family were in danger and it was all his fault!

In his time to think, Mothball had at least figured out which way he was going to escape. The main exit was out, because it led to the hive and he would be seen. If he went out the back and somehow incapacitated the two guards, he was less likely to get caught. But how was he to do that? It was not like he could make them obey him with a glow of his horn.

Wait a minute.

As prince, his mother taught him to control changelings as well as ponies. Only royal changelings could do that, otherwise any changeling would have the power to overthrow the queen. Mind control was not his strength, but if he could harness enough energy...

He lifted the poster and poked his head through the hole. Two sentries hovered on either side.

"Hey, Hornet! Wasp! I'm getting kind of hungry. Do you think I can slip out for a moment and get a quick meal? I won't tell Mother!"

The sentry on his left, Hornet, smirked. "Nice try, your highness, but we weren't born yesterday!"

"Yeah," Wasp nodded. "Those guys are all in the nursery with the other larvae!"

"We have orders from the queen not to let you out of your room under any circumstances!"

Mothball closed his eyes as his horn began to glow.

"Hey, what are you...?" Hornet started to ask.

He was cut off as the prince shot a green beam at him.

Wasp gasped. "Sound the a...!"

He was silenced too as Mothball placed him under his control.

"It worked," the prince uttered. "Now, please remain quiet and listen carefully. I'm going out, but you are not to tell anyone. Understand?"

The sentries nodded absent-mindedly. Triumphant, the prince did not waste a moment as he took to the skies.

"Oh, I hope I'm not too late!" he exclaimed.

"Thank ya for helpin' me out today, Sugar," Applejack said to her adopted daughter as they stood behind the apple cart.

"Well, it was either this or spend the day with Gemstone," Cinnamon Roll giggled.

"Now hon, that's not very nice."

Though Applejack was still a little short with Rarity after their spat at the Gala. She felt guilty for not apologizing for her insensitivity.

The cowgirl's ears perked up at the sound of a familiar voice, though it was making inappropriate noises. It was coming from an alley a few feet away.

"Excuse me, hon," she said to Cinnamon Roll. "I've got to check something out."

Applejack cautiously walked towards the sound and peered her head around the corner. What she saw made her jaw drop.

"Fluttershy?!"

Yes, I'm leaving you hanging again! MWAHAHAHAHA!

Since in this story, Twilight's been a princess for a long time, she would become wiser and more mature, which is why I made her Screwball's mentor as Celestia was Twilight's.

Betrayal

Notice I bumped up the rating, as this story is starting to take a darker turn, but nothing too explicit. You think it should still be K+? You're gonna hate me for this.

Discord was taking a stroll through Ponyville, hoping to get his mind off things, when he saw Applejack running toward him.

"Whoa there, cowgirl!" Discord said, stopping her with his paw. "What's the rush?"

"Oh shoot," Applejack muttered under her breath.

Of all the folks she could bump into, it *had* to be him! She put on her best poker face, which was not very convincing.

"Oh, uh, howdy partner! I was just, uh...I have to, uh...I left the bath water runnin'! Yeah, I gotta get home, see? So, uh...bye!"

She thought she was free until the draconequus picked her up by the tail.

"Element of Honesty, huh?" he smirked. "So what's *really* troubling you, AJ?"

"Uh..." Applejack gulped. "I don't really wanna talk about it!" She started sweating. "Plus, it doesn't concern you!"

Discord shook his head in amusement. "You know I can always just peek into your head and discover what you're hiding?"

"No!" the cowgirl shouted, kicking her legs desperately. "You're not gonna like it!"

"Ooh! That juicy, huh? This is gonna be fun!"

"Discord, trust me on this! You don't wanna..."

"The more you say that, the more I *do* wanna!"

Applejack had no chance against the Lord of Chaos. He tapped his claw on her head and accessed her most recent memory. The scene shifted and he found himself standing beside Applejack in an alley. She stood there slack-jawed, staring intensely at something in front of her.

Discord looked in the pony's direction and soon his expression matched hers.

An orange stallion was pressing a mare against the wall, kissing her passionately. The mare had her forelegs around his neck as she returned his kiss with pleasure. Discord had never felt more disgusted about anything in his life.

For that mare was his wife.

"Fluttershy?" Applejack uttered.

The pegasus pushed the stallion away to look at the stunned cowgirl with those once innocent teal eyes. She rolled them in annoyance.

"Uh, hello?" she said in a tone that was very unlike her. "Do you *mind* ?"

She was about to pull the stallion in again when Applejack cut between them.

"What is this?!" she demanded. " *Who* is this?! What about Discord?! And Screwball and Zany?!"

Fluttershy scoffed. "They'll be fine, so long as they don't find out. And if they do, they'll get over it."

Applejack could not believe it. "What's come over you?! Do ya have any idea what Discord will do if...?"

"Move aside, will you?" Fluttershy snapped, shoving her friend. "We were in the middle of something!"

Discord had seen enough and flashed back to reality. Applejack was

still hanging from his paw. The shock in his face struck fear in her heart.

"I...I'm sorry!" she stammered. "I...I wanted to tell ya but...I didn't know how to..."

She yelped as he dropped her. She rubbed her head and sat up.

"Discord, are you...?"

The draconequus screamed as his body erupted into flames. In a few seconds, there was nothing left but ashes. Applejack knew he had not really burned to a crisp, but it was not a good sign. The cowgirl buried her face in her hooves.

"Oh, Fluttershy! What have you done?!"

Once she was sure Applejack was gone, Fluttershy wrenched herself away from her lover.

"Hey, Stinky! Ever heard of a breath mint? You smell like a Timberwolf!"

The stallion scoffed. "What about your horrible acting skills? You really think *that's* how the wimpy pegasus would act?"

"Hey, it worked, didn't it? In a matter of minutes, that cowgirl will be spilling the beans to Discord. Since she's the Element of Honesty, he'll believe her."

"Queen Chrysalis will certainly be pleased."

They both laughed as they changed into their changeling selves.

"Now let's get out of here before things get ugly!" the male said.

The female nodded in agreement. "Yeah. I wouldn't want to be Fluttershy right now!"

Meanwhile, the real Fluttershy was in the steam room with Rarity.

"So have you talked with Fancy Pants yet?" Fluttershy asked her friend.

The unicorn sighed. "I was going to, but..." She stomped her hoof. "The minute I walk in... *she's* there! Oh, she was all over him!"

The pegasus gasped. "Oh, goodness! What did you do?"

"What else could I do? I threw the divorce papers at him and left!"

"Oh, Rarity! I'm so sorry! What did Fancy Pants say?"

"Heck should I know! Pardon my French. I stormed out before he could say anything!"

"You didn't give him a chance to explain himself?"

"There was nothing for him to explain!"

"Maybe he had nothing to do with it."

"Maybe..." Rarity's face fell. "Huh. I hadn't thought of that. Oh, I screwed up again, didn't I? I have to make this right. How are your troubles working out?"

"Screwball and Discord still won't talk to each other, but we're going to sort it all out tonight."

When Fluttershy got home, a chocolate rain storm was brewing above the castle.

"Oh goodness," she uttered. "I hope they haven't gotten into another fight."

She opened the door to find her husband sitting in a circle of fire in the middle of the room.

"Discord?!" she asked in shock.

The draconequus turned at the sound of her voice. As soon as he caught sight of her, the flames extinguished. Fluttershy cautiously approached him and gingerly put a hoof on his shoulder.

"Are you alright?"

He jerked away from her. Discord stood up and clenched his fists. He tried so hard to keep his anger contained that all he managed to say was:

"Why?"

Fluttershy tilted her head in concern. "What?"

Discord gritted his teeth. "I gave up everything for you. I devoted myself to you." He spun around, his eyes burning with fury. "And when we made the vow to love and honor each other for all eternity, I assumed you would do the same!"

His wife blinked in confusion. "What are you talking about?"

"But that was never enough for you, was it?! WAS IT?!"

"Discord I don't..."

She squealed as he grabbed her foreleg.

"Who is he?!"

"Discord, you're hurting me!"

"WHO IS HE?!"

Fluttershy was taken aback. He had not raised his voice at her like this in a long time.

"He?"

"That stallion! The one that you were playing tonsil hockey with!"

Her eyes grew big. "What?! Discord, I don't know what you..."

"You were *kissing* him! I saw you!"

"Discord, I...no! You're the only one I've ever kissed!"

"Don't play innocent with me! I *saw* you! Applejack saw you! You calling Applejack a liar?!"

"What...I..."

He let go of her forleg and lifted her by the diamond and gold rings around her neck.

"Does this mean *nothing* to you?!" he bellowed. "After everything I've done for you, after having my children, this is how you repay me?!"

"Discord, please!" Fluttershy begged. "There is no other stallion! My heart belongs to you!"

"Oh, is that so? Well, how about the rest of you?!"

"Discord!"

Tears formed in her eyes. She did not understand what was happening. How could Discord have seen her with another stallion when she was at the spa all day? She had not even talked to another stallion on her way back!

"Discord, you have to believe me! I love you and only you!"

She squeaked as he dropped her to the floor and turned away. He could not bear to look at her.

"Apparently, you didn't love me *enough* !" He removed the gold band from his finger and threw it at her. "You will regret this. YOU *ALL* WILL!"

He burst into flames and vanished from sight, leaving Fluttershy in a saddened and confused state.

Screwball sat on the park bench, her brother in the baby buggy beside her. She reached in and tickled his stomach. He giggled,

which made her smile a bit.

"Sometimes," she said, "I think you're the only one who understands me, bro."

A pink ball rolled up to her feet. Screwball glanced down as a filly rushed up to retrieve it.

"Hey, Prism," she said.

The multi-colored filly looked up and grinned. "Hey, Screwy! Whatcha doing?"

"Just...taking Zany for a walk."

"But you're sitting."

"Well, I'm resting. What are you doing here?"

"Playing catch with the Tri-Pies and," she grimaced, "Gemstone. Well, not so much with her, cuz she's afraid she'll break a hoof if she touches the ball. Our parents are all busy today, so we decided to hang out."

"Where are the twins?"

"They're having a race somewhere. They didn't invite me along because..."

She brought out her wings. Even though Prism was nine, she could not fly yet. It was embarrassing for her, considering every pony in her family was an accomplished flyer.

"I see," Screwball said.

"Well, I gotta get back now. See ya!"

"See ya."

The pegasus filly was about to leave when a drop of water splashed on her nose.

"Hey," she said. "It's not supposed to rain today."

The two looked up at the sky as it clouded in pink. A few seconds later, it started pouring down chocolate milk.

"Not funny, Screwball!" Prism exclaimed, placing a hoof on her hip.

"I'm not doing it!" Screwball insisted.

She looked at Zany, but he was huddling under the buggy's canopy and sticking out his tongue in disgust. Strange, he *loved* chocolate milk.

"Hey, Screwy?"

She glanced up to see a gray stallion in front of her.

"Do I know you?" she asked.

"I'm," he cleared his throat, "MB?"

Screwball saw his eyes flash green. It was Mothball.

"Prism, I think you'd better get back to the others and go home."

The filly raced back to her group. The Tri-Pies were sticking their tongues out and collecting as much rain as possible, while Gemstone was squealing under a tree.

"What are you doing here?" Screwball asked the disguised changeling.

Mothball glanced nervously at the stroller. "I need to talk with you *alone* ."

"We can talk here. It's only my brother."

"No, you don't understand. That baby is..."

He was interrupted when Discord materialized in front of them. Mothball yelped and ran away from him.

"Wait!" Screwball called, but he was gone in a flash.

"Why hello there, Screwy!" Discord said in a crazy tone. "You like

what I've done with the weather?"

The young mare looked at her father curiously. "You okay, Dad?"

"Oh, I'm *fine* ! Hey, honey! I'm sorry about our little fight last week! How about we make up over some father-daughter bonding? You want to help your daddy make a cola storm in Manehattan?"

Her eyes lit up. "Cool! But...wouldn't Mom get mad?"

Discord tensed. "Forget about your mother! She's of no concern to us anymore!"

"I, uh... *what* ?!"

He scooped her in his arms. "But we don't need her! We don't need *any pony* ! All we need is each other! We can be one big happy family without your mother! You hear me? ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY!"

Screwball cringed. "Uh, Dad? You're really starting to creep me out."

He held her in the crook of his arm and gestured to the ponies running from the chocolate rain.

"We will rule this world together, my dear! I will be King and you," he turned her hat into a tiara, "will be the princess! And this little scamper," he picked up Zany and made a tiny crown appear on his head, "will be a prince!"

The infant gurgled in delight while Screwball's stomach churned.

"But Dad, you promised you wouldn't..."

"Our first order of business will be to have revenge on those colts who bullied you in school!"

With that idea in mind, Screwball's mouth broke into a devious smile. "What are we waiting for then?"

Discord laughed in a way he hadn't in a long time. "That's my girl!"

"Though Dad...I just have two things."

"Anything, my dear."

"First, you promise we won't seriously hurt any pony?"

He batted his eyes innocently. "Well *of course* not, sweetie!"

"Second..." She tapped her tiara and turned it back into her propeller hat. "Don't ever touch my hat again."

Discord laughed maniacally. "Come, my little abominations! We have chaos to wreak!"

Mothball had watched the entire scene from behind a tree. He hung his head shamefully.

"I'm too late!"

Um...yeah. I really hate to cut it off there, but it's getting late.

Misunderstanding

OMG I'M SO SORRY! I just got settled in my dorm and finally found some free time! In the future, updates will be slower (for YouTube AND Fanfiction!). Sorry, summer's over and I have to figure out how I'm going to end this.

When Applejack arrived at the castle, Fluttershy was lying in a fetal position on the floor.

"Fluttershy!" the cowgirl cried, racing up to her. "Are you okay?"

Despite the shocking event of the day, Applejack worried that Discord had harmed her.

"D-d-d-discord," the pegasus stammered.

"He didn't *hurt* ya, did he?"

"Not...too much."

"Oh, it's a nightmare out there, Sugar! I mean what you did was wrong, but he didn't have to..."

She looked up. "What are you talking about?"

"Fluttershy!" Rainbow Dash cried as she, Pinkie and Rarity entered the castle. "What's going on?"

"It's raining yummy delicious chocolate milk rain everywhere!" Pinkie exclaimed. "And *still* no whipped cream!"

"We just picked the kids up from the park, and they said they saw Discord take Screwball and Zany! And Prism said, and I quote, 'he's gone coo-coo!' Unquote."

"What's this all about?" Rarity asked.

"Fluttershy cheated on Discord and he got angry," Applejack said quickly.

Rainbow scoffed. "Get real, AJ! Fluttershy would never..."

"I saw her! She was in the alley this afternoon kissin' another stallion!"

"That can't be!" Rarity declared. "She was at the spa with me all afternooon!"

"Then who did I see?"

"It certainly wasn't Fluttershy!"

She narrowed her eyes at the unicorn. "You callin' me a liar?"

"You calling Fluttershy a common...?!"

"Girls!" Pinkie screamed. "This is no time for fighting! Can't you see Fluttershy's upset?"

The pegasus shivered as she sobbed some more. Applejack sighed.

"You're right. Fluttershy would never do a thing like that. She loves Discord more than anything! It's just...it looked so much like you! But it wasn't like you at all!"

Pinkie gasped dramatically. "Maybe it was a changeling! I mean a changeling showed up at the Gala, so maybe this is all some evil plot to get Discord to turn evil again! Because the queen wants REVENGE!"

Every pony stared at her with their eyebrows raised.

"That actually makes sense," Rainbow said with a shrug.

"Oh, goodness!" Rarity exclaimed. "And now Discord's flying around causing chaos, thinking poor, dear Fluttershy has betrayed him!"

"And he's probably teaching Screwball and Zany to be meanies too!" Pinkie squealed.

Fluttershy stood up. "I have to find them! I have to make things right!"

"They could be anywhere by now, Sugar," Applejack said, shaking her head. "We best get to Twilight. I hate to say this, but...we need the Elements of Harmony."

The yellow pegasus gasped. "No! We *can't* turn him to stone!"

"Hopefully, it won't come to that. I'm sayin' we should have them just in case diplomatic talks don't cut it."

"Applejack is right," Rarity agreed. "We should go to Canterlot at once!"

"What about the kids?" Rainbow asked. "Isn't Cinnamon Stick still on his date with Dinky?"

"Oh, shoot!" Applejack exclaimed. "I nearly forgot! Let's meet at the train station in half an hour, make sure our families are safe!"

"I'll tell Soarin and the kids to go to your place, AJ. The sky's not the safest place for them at the moment."

"And my little Gemstone!" Rarity shrieked. "I can't leave her alone!"

"She went with the Tri-Pies to our house," Pinkie assured her. "Red Shoes will take care of her."

"Then I will take Fluttershy for now, until we meet!"

"Alright, ponies!" Applejack cheered. "Let's break!"

"What's the point of even farming rocks, anyway?" Screwball asked her father.

The three beings of chaos were positioned comfortably on a cotton candy cloud, overlooking Pinkie Pie's family rock farm. Gold Digger was chipping at a large boulder beneath them.

"Who knows?" Discord shrugged. "Why don't we give them something useful to mine? Any ideas, sweetie?"

Screwball rubbed her chin and then grinned mischievously. "I think I do."

She took a piece of cloud and shaped it into a lever. She pulled it back and a pile of bricks fell from the cloud towards Gold Digger.

"Now, now, honey," Discord warned. "That could kill him, and put him out of his misery too soon. At least give him a sporting chance."

"Point taken." Screwball summoned a megaphone. "GERONIMO!"

Gold Digger looked up. "What?"

When he saw the pile of bricks plummeting towards him, he screamed and jumped out of the way. Screwball summoned a banana peel on which he slipped and fell face down into a banana cream pie. The two chaotic beings rolled onto their backs in laughter.

"Classic!" Discord cried. "That's a classic!"

"Can we make it rain now, Dad?" Screwball begged, bouncing up and down. "Can we, can we?"

"Already?"

"Yeah! But I've got something better than chocolate milk!"

"I don't know what could be better, but go ahead."

With a cackle, Screwball summoned a flock of pink clouds. A strange purple substance dripped from them onto Gold Digger. After a few seconds, his fur started turning the color of the rain. He screamed and raced inside the Pie family's house.

Discord snorted. "What *was* that stuff?"

"Purple hair dye!" Screwball bawled.

"Oh, *genius* , dear!"

The filly laughed and picked up her brother. "Did you see that, Zany? Wasn't that the most hilarious thing ever? That'll teach him to pick on ponies like *us* !"

As she embraced the smiling infant, Screwball started feeling dizzy. She put her hoof to her head.

"You alright, dear?" Discord asked with concern.

"Yeah," she muttered, shaking her head. "Dad, can we go home now?"

"No!" the draconequus said quickly. "I mean...we only pranked one pony! Wasn't there another colt who made fun of you?"

"Silver Tray!" Screwball gritted her teeth. "How could I forget the little minion?! I wonder what he's doing now."

"Let's find out."

Discord snapped his fingers and teleported the three of them to a large mansion. Two mares, one pink with purple hair and one gray with platinum hair, lay sprawled in lawn chairs, basking in the sunlight.

"Hey, I know her!" Screwball declared, pointing at the pink pony. "That's Gold Digger's big sister, Diamond Tiara! That other one must be Silver Spoon. She's Silver Tray's sister."

As if on cue, the teenage colt appeared in the doorway of the mansion, wearing a butler's uniform and carrying a tray of lemonade.

"Hurry up, Tray!" Silver Spoon ordered. "You're going to have to pick up the pace if you want those ten bits!"

Silver Tray groaned. "Coming, sis!"

"Gee," Screwball said. "I almost feel sorry for the guy." She paused. "Almost."

"Watch and learn, sweetie," Discord coaxed. "So he wants to earn some extra money, eh?"

He snapped his fingers and a coin appeared at Silver Tray's hooves. The colt's face lit up.

"What luck!"

"Yeah, but is it good or bad?" the draconequus whispered.

His paw glowed as he pointed it at the colt. Gold light enveloped the tray, tipping it over and spilling the lemonade over the two mares.

"Hey!" Diamond Tiara squealed. "Ew! It's sticky! This will take forever to wash out!"

"Nice job, dummy!" Silver Spoon snapped.

"But I didn't..." her brother protested.

"Go make yourself useful and get us some towels!" Diamond Tiara demanded.

Silver Tray sighed. "Yes, your highness."

"That was a little mean, don't you think, Daddy?" Screwball asked.

"You're right," Discord replied, tapping his chin. "We should help them get those stains out."

He snapped his fingers, summoning a bucket of water. Snickering, he dumped it over the mares. They screamed in shock.

"Need a cool down, ladies?!" Discord mocked.

"Oh my gosh!" Silver Tray exclaimed, dropping what was left of the lemonade. "You're that evil dude!"

"Correct-a-mundo!"

"Look, I don't want any trouble! I didn't do anything to your daughter! It was all Gold Digger, I swear!"

"Oh, really? That's not the way *I* heard it!"

He used his magic to turn the boy upside-down and repeatedly banged his head into the ground. Appalled, Screwball teleported to her father's side.

"Daddy, what are you doing?!"

"Knocking some sense into him."

"But you could hurt him!"

"Didn't you used to do this to your foalsitters?"

"I was little! You didn't know any better!"

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry!" Silver Tray pleaded. "I didn't mean to...ow!"

"Dad, please!"

Discord groaned. "Fine. I'll put the little piggy down."

He did so, but also tied him to a large platter and stuck an apple in his mouth.

"I'd say he's learned his lesson."

Screwball shook her head. "Dad, this has been fun and all, but we should call it a day before we get into any more trouble. I mean Mom's not gonna be happy."

The draconequus scowled. "Who cares how your mother feels?!"

The filly gasped. "Dad! How can you say such a thing?! What's gotten into you?"

He paused. "Let's just say I've finally seen the light. Hey! Aren't the Orioles playing the Manehattan Giants this afternoon?"

"Well, yeah."

"And didn't the Orioles beat the Zappers last week?"

"Yeah, real hard too! But Dad..."

She trailed off as he put his tail around her. "How'd you like to crash the ball game like old times?"

Screwball was tempted at the mention of baseball, but she could not stop thinking about her mother. Why was her dad acting like he did not care?

"That...does sound fun, but...we should get home. It's Zany's nap time anyway."

The infant appeared in Discord's arms. He was bouncing up and down with excitement.

"He doesn't look sleepy to me!"

As he tickled the baby, he felt a sudden wave of fatigue. Screwball raised an eyebrow as he slunk to the ground.

"Maybe *you* could use a nap?"

Discord shook his head wildly. "No! How can either of us sleep when there's chaos to wreak! Do you want to sabotage that ball game or not?"

"I really don't know..."

"I'll let you corrupt the pitcher!"

"Mom wouldn't like..."

"I'll let you hit a couple throws!"

"Aunt Twilight said that..."

"I'll buy you some peanuts!"

Her eyes widened. "Extra salty?"

"Extra, *extra* salty!"

"Done! But after this, we're going straight home, right?"

"But of course, honey!"

She crossed her hooves. "Pinkie Promise?"

He rolled his eyes and made the gesture. "I Pinkie Promise."

Screwball smiled in satisfaction, not noticing that his fingers were crossed behind his back.

Twilight ceased her pacing when her five best friends came bolting through the door.

"What is going on out there?!" she demanded. "Fluttershy, I thought you would have Discord under your control by now!"

The yellow pegasus whimpered. Applejack gave her an assuring pat on the back.

"They had a misunderstanding," the cowgirl explained.

"Now Discord's all mad and making it rain chocolate milk like crazy!" Pinkie shrieked.

Twilight's eyes widened in fear. "Where's Screwball?"

Fluttershy cried and buried her face in Applejack's shoulder.

"Discord took her and Zany with him," Rarity replied sincerely. "Now all three of them are on the loose!"

The alicorn hung her head. "I was afraid this would happen."

"But that's not all!" Rainbow declared. "We think the changelings are involved!"

"Explain."

Applejack spoke slowly. "I saw Fluttershy with another stallion and Discord saw it too when he looked into my memories."

"But Fluttershy was at the spa with me at the time," Rarity pointed

out.

"So you think it might have been a changeling you saw instead of Fluttershy?" Twilight asked for clarification.

The cowgirl nodded. "So now Discord thinks Fluttershy's cheated on him and is takin' it out on Equestria!"

"Hold on a second!" Pinkie Pie exclaimed. "If Discord could see into *your* mind, why didn't he open up Fluttershy's head to see that she was telling the truth?"

"He looked pretty mad. I'll bet he wasn't thinkin' straight."

"Honestly!" Rarity huffed. "You see what happens when you jump to conclusions without finding out the facts first?"

Fluttershy stopped crying to glare at the unicorn.

"What?"

Twilight sighed and looked at the chaos storm through the window. "I'm afraid...we need the Elements of Harmony."

Every pony gasped.

"WHAT?!" Fluttershy screamed. "No! We can't, Twilight! We can't turn them to stone! They're my family! And poor little Zany is just a baby! And Screwball...I promised her she'd never suffer such a fate!"

"Fluttershy," Twilight said slowly. "I don't want to use the Elements on them either. Hopefully, we won't have to, if we can reason with Discord. However, if things get out of hoof and he won't listen..."

"NO!"

"If it turns out we have to use the Elements against him, it will only be temporary. I know a spell that I think might release him from stone. We wouldn't be punishing him for all eternity, we'd just be giving him a time-out."

Fluttershy relaxed a little. "I guess if it's for a little while...oh, but he'll

hate me so much even if it was just for a little while! And what about the kids?"

"Don't worry. We won't use the Elements against them. Zany is too young for such punishment, and Screwball is smart. Once we explain things to her, she'll come around."

"I hope so," Rainbow said. "That kid is like family!"

"And ya don't give up on family," Applejack agreed.

"Besides, the twins won't look at me the same way again if I freeze their best friend."

"Same with Cinnamon Stick and Apple Blossom."

"I know little Gemstone will think of me a monster!" Rarity exclaimed.

"And the Tri-Pies will think I'm a mean meanie pants for the rest of my life!" Pinkie squealed.

Twilight turned back to Fluttershy. "We'll only use the Elements as a last resort, but we won't use them without your permission."

The pegasus considered this. Discord had told her how much torment he had endured while in stone. She would never forgive herself if she had to put him through it again. Screwball would certainly be horrified, and what would happen if they could not release him? On the other hoof, if he were frozen, perhaps he would listen to her.

"Just...don't hurt him."

"Look over there, honey!" Discord exclaimed, pointing to one of the screaming ponies. "You missed one!"

Screwball nodded and aimed her paintball cannon at the pony. "Gangway!"

The stallion cried out as he was splattered with orange paint. Zany

clapped in delight.

"Excellent shot, sweetheart!" Discord declared, ruffling his daughter's mane.

"This is awesome!" Screwball shouted. "But you know what we should have? Polka-dotted paint!"

"Brilliant! Why hadn't I thought of that?"

She was about to reload the cannon when she noticed her baby brother was missing. "Hey, where's Zany?"

Discord rolled his eyes. "Oh, he wants to play hide-and-seek! Let's find him before he gets stuck in a wall again. I'll search high, you search low."

Screwball saluted before teleporting to the ground. Her smile faded when she noticed the ponies running at the sight of her. One unicorn with a toothpaste cutie mark looked back at her for a moment. Screwball recognized her as Aquafresh.

"What did I ever do to *you* ?"

The chaotic pony was confused. "Come on, Aquafresh! It was just a joke!"

She glared at her. "Look around, Screwy. How many ponies do you see laughing?"

Screwball stood frozen in place as the unicorn ran off with the others, leaving her in an empty paint-splattered street. She shook Aquafresh's words off and began searching for her brother.

"Zany!" she called. "Zany! Come out, come out, wherever you are! I've got some chocolate milk!"

"Screwy?"

She turned and saw her best friend standing behind her. Only one eye was looking directly at her, but both of them were sad.

"Dinky!" Screwball exclaimed. "Hey! How'd the date with Cinnamon Stick go?"

"It got cut short," the unicorn said bluntly, "on account of the rain."

"Oops!" the earth pony giggled. "Sorry about that! I hope you didn't get *too* wet!"

She expected Dinky to laugh along with her, but the unicorn's serious expression did not falter. After a while, Screwball's smile was gone again.

"Dinky, you okay?"

"Why are you doing this?"

Screwball blinked. "What? This? Relax, Dinky! Dad and I are just having a bit of fun! By the way, have you seen Zany?"

"No."

"Come on, Dinks!" She summoned a smiley mask. "Get into the spirit of things!"

Dinky stared at her for a long time and then turned away. Screwball lowered her mask in puzzlement.

"What's the matter with you? It's not like I haven't done stuff like this before."

"Yes, but..." Dinky said in a choked voice. "You weren't... *mean* to other ponies before."

Screwball scoffed. " *Mean* ?! Dinks, it's not like any pony's getting hurt!"

The unicorn looked up at her. "Cinnamon Stick slipped on a banana peel and hit his head."

The earth pony froze. "Dinky, I...I didn't know! I can fix it! I mean *I* can't, but I can get Dad to!"

"Just because you can fix him doesn't change the fact that you hurt him in the first place!"

Screwball was taken aback. "Dinky, I've never seen this side of you..."

"Really?!" Dinky snapped. "Gee, that's really funny! Because I've never seen *this* side of *you* ! What happened to my best friend? The pony who always stood up for me, who would never hurt a fly? What happened to her?"

"What are you talking about, Dinky? She's right here!"

The unicorn shook her head. "No. You're not my best friend."

Screwball's heart shattered into millions of pieces. "Dinky, how can you say that?"

"I wanted to believe that Gold Digger and Silver Tray were wrong about you, but...now I see they were right. You...you're just like your dad. You're...you're bad."

Dinky turned and ran while Screwball stood hurt and bewildered. In all their years of friendship, Dinky had never spoken so harshly to her, and never had she said such a thing.

"She's wrong," she declared to herself. "I would never hurt anyone! I'm *not* bad! I'm not!"

Screwball stomped her hoof, splashing it in a chocolate puddle. She subconsciously cleared the water and saw her reflection. Her parents always said she had a sweet and pretty face, but now it looked fierce and menacing. Realization overwhelmed her, her scowl turning into a frown.

She gazed around at Ponyville and only now noticed how different it looked. Buildings were floating upside down and splattered in paint, the streets had a checkerboard design and banana peels scattered everywhere, the school she attended as a filly was hanging sideways from a tree.

Everything looked...wrong. This was not the town she grew up in,

these were not the streets she played in, this...this was chaos. Not a few harmless whimsical pranks, but full-scale chaos, the kind of thing her father said she was meant to create.

She did not like it.

I'm aware that Screwball did not see her father's lie! I'll explain later!

Truth or Chaos?

In regards to the audio series "Bride of Discord," I have all the voice actors I need and hopefully, if time is on our side, the first part should be finished by the end of the month.

"How do you suppose we'll find them?" Rarity asked once they each had their necklaces on. "They could be anywhere in Equestria by now!"

The ponies gasped as an all-too-familiar laugh echoed throughout the palace.

"He's here!" Fluttershy shivered.

"Discord!" Twilight called. "Stop this madness!"

The draconequus laughed again, still not revealing himself. "Madness? I assure you, I am quite sane. After all, how else do you expect me to react when I discover that my innocent, devoted wife is not so innocent and devoted!"

"Discord, listen to me!" Fluttershy shouted. "What you saw, it wasn't me!"

"Oh, really? How many other ponies can match your delicate beauty? Applejack, you were there! You saw!"

"I don't know what I saw!" Applejack cried, looking around for the source of the voice.

"We have the Elements of Harmony, Discord!" Twilight declared. "Surrender Screwball and Zany and you won't be harmed!"

" *I* won't be harmed?" He roared with laughter. "That's rich! That's *real* rich!"

The alicorn stomped her hoof. "Enough! Why are you even here?"

"Isn't it obvious?"

Fluttershy squealed as Discord came out of nowhere and scooped her into his arms.

"I've come to collect my wife, of course!"

"What?!" Flutershy gasped. "I...I thought you were mad at me."

"Oh, I was," he purred, stroking her mane. "But I don't blame *you* , my dear. It was that pesky stallion who corrupted your innocence. Don't worry. He won't be a problem anymore."

Her eyes widened. "W-what did you do to him?"

He chuckled. "You don't want to know."

Applejack gulped. "The stallion...was *real* ?!"

"Oh, yes," Discord sighed. "He was real. I could tell by the way he screamed."

Twilight gulped, but maintained her stern appearance. "You've gone too far this time, Discord!"

"Oh, blah, blah, *blah* ! Tell it to someone who cares, *Princess* ! That title is *so* weak, by the way! I mean come on, who does Celestia think she is, handing a crown and wings to a plain, ordinary unicorn?"

"Hey!" Rainbow Dash shouted, floating defensively in front of Twilight.

"After all, that crown should go to some pony who really deserves it."

Twilight gasped as her crown levitated from her head and onto Fluttershy's.

"Discord, what...?" the pegasus started to say.

"Picture it, my dear!" Discord said, holding her out to face him. "You and I will rule this land together as the King and Queen of Chaos!"

Fluttershy's eyes widened. "What?"

"It'll be better than anything you've ever dreamed, darling! We'll improve this boring, pathetic world into a beautiful playground for our children! And since we have forever, there will be more children to come! We could repopulate!"

Fluttershy yanked herself out of Discord's grasp. "What's gotten into you? I thought you had abandoned these thoughts!"

"I did not abandon them. I merely...set them aside for a while." He smirked as he put his arm around her. "Come now, sweetheart. You've always been my queen. Now we can make it official."

She shoved his paw away. "Never!"

With a toothy grin, he grabbed her by the shoulders. "But honey bunch, I thought you loved me!"

"No!" Fluttershy cried, kicking her legs furiously. "You're not my Discord! You're not the stallion I fell in love with!"

"Reality check, dear! I *am* !"

"Enough!" Twilight bellowed, shooting a poweful beam at him.

Discord's paw recoiled as the magic stung him, releasing his hold of Fluttershy. The pegasus bolted behind the alicorn.

"You leave us no choice, Discord," Twilight said, placing her crown back on her head. "Unless you cease this insanity within twenty-four hours, the next time we meet won't be as pleasant."

The draconequus laughed maniacally. "You'll have to catch me first!"

After he had vanished, his laughter continued.

"What's happened to him?" Fluttershy sobbed.

"He's flipped his wig!" Applejack exclaimed.

Twilight sighed. "I'm sorry, Fluttershy, but it must be done."

"No," Fluttershy uttered.

"It's the only way to save Equestria...and Discord's sanity."

The draconequus chuckled as his body transformed into Chrysalis.

"Oh, that was *too* easy! Soon Discord will be nothing but a lawn ornament and Equestria will be mine for the taking! I love it when things go my way."

Meanwhile, the real Discord was searching the cotton candy clouds for his son.

"Alright, Zany!" he called. "You win! I give up!"

After a few moments, the infant appeared in front of him. The draconequus grinned and snuggled him in his arms.

"Oh, you little troublemaker, you!"

Discord put his paw to his head as he started to feel faint.

"Sheesh. Hostile takeover is hard work. What say we find your sister and we take five?"

Zany opened his mouth in a smile and clapped his tiny hooves. Discord scanned the streets below for his daughter.

"Ah, there she is!"

He swooped down beside the young mare, who was sitting still and staring at her reflection in a puddle.

"I found him!" Discord declared, holding Zany out to her. "After all the excitement, the little scamper's probably worn out. How about we all take a nap on a cloud? Just like we used to."

He awaited a response, but received only silence. She did not even lift her head to look at him. Confused, Discord cleared his throat.

"I *said* ..."

"I heard you," Screwball mumbled, almost inaudibly.

"Aha! She speaks! So what do you say to that nap?"

"Dad, I wanna go home."

Discord froze. "Later, honey."

She finally turned her head toward him. "I'm tired, Daddy. You said that after the game, we would go home, but the game ended an hour ago." She scowled. "You Pinkie Promised!"

"Have I taught you nothing, dear?" Discord asked, holding up his crossed fingers. "Crossies don't count!"

Screwball gasped. "You...you *lied* to me? How...how did I not know that?"

He shrugged. "You're slipping, my dear. Maybe you just need a rest."

"I *do* need a rest, in my own bed. Why can't we go home?"

"This *is* our home!" Discord gestured to their surroundings. "This entire city is ours for the taking!"

"Dad, stop it! I'm tired of this game! It will not only get us in trouble with Mom, but the princesses won't..."

"Who cares?!" he snapped. "Who cares what your vile mother thinks?!"

"Daddy! What's gotten into you? Why do you keep talking about Mom like that?"

Discord bit his lip as he looked down at his angry daughter. He then sighed and handed Zany to her.

"Okay," he breathed. "I'll tell you the truth, but you're not going to like it." He turned his face away. "Your mother...left me." He clenched

his paw into a fist. "She left *us* !"

Screwball blinked in disbelief. "What are you talking about?"

"SHE LEFT ME FOR ANOTHER STALLION!" he roared.

"WHAT?!" Screwball shrieked.

"It's true! I saw her! She was playing tonsil hockey with that...that..."

Screwball quickly covered Zany's ears as he said the word. Discord faced his children.

"But we don't need her, my darlings! We don't need *any* of them! We'll show them what happens when they mess with the House of Chaos!"

"Daddy..." Screwball said in a broken voice. "Mom couldn't...she wouldn't! She...she *loves* us..."

" *Loved* us!" Discord hissed. "But we apparently were too repulsive for her to continue loving!"

"No! She would never! Mom loves us more than anything! She told me..."

"Lies! All lies!"

"She wasn't...I didn't..."

"Then your talent is clearly *flawed* , my dear!"

The young mare was trying to process all this. Her thinking was fuzzy due to her shock and fatigue. None of this made sense. Why would her sweet, caring mother do such a thing? Did she not love them? Did she not know what Discord would become?

"She wouldn't!" Screwball insisted, her eyes filling with tears. "You're...you're lying!"

"Am I?" Discord said with an arched brow. "It's time you learned, my dear: you cannot trust anyone, especially the ones you love!"

Screwball glanced down at her reflection again and then at Zany. She closed her eyes and sucked up the tears before glaring at her father.

"Well," she said, "I suppose that means I can't trust *you* either."

Discord blinked in surprise. "What?"

Still cradling her brother, the adolescent stood on her hind legs. "I don't want this, Daddy! It wasn't so bad when it was just a few harmless pranks, but this...this...this is wrong! It's...it's evil!"

"Honey, listen to me..."

"NO! *You* listen! All my life, ponies have told me that you were evil and that I was evil too! I never believed them, but now...now I see they're right! You promised you would never be evil again! You promised the princesses, you promised Mom, you promised *me* !" She paused. "But you lied."

Her words pierced him like a sword. "Sweetie, I..."

"Go ahead, then! Spread your evil! Just leave me out of it!" She looked down at Zany. "Leave *us* out of it."

"What are you saying?"

Screwball turned her back to him. "Bye, Daddy."

"Screwy! Wait!"

But the young mare was gone with the infant before he could stop her. The two reappeared deep within the Everfree Forest. Screwball's knees collapsed beneath her.

"Wow, I'm more tired than I thought," she said aloud.

She glanced at her brother who was smiling with glee, clearly oblivious to what had just occurred.

"Well, it looks like it's just you and me now, bro." She gazed up at the sky. "Where can we go? Mom will be looking for us, and so will

the princesses. I don't believe what Daddy said, but if it's true... Mom certainly won't be happy, that's for sure. What if the princesses punish us?"

She held Zany close to her. "I won't let that happen to you, I promise. We can't go home. That'll be the first place they'll look for us. We can't stay with Dinky, and I can only imagine what my other friends must be thinking of me right now. Every pony must think I'm a monster!"

She sighed and held out her brother. "I really screwed up this time, didn't I?"

As she gazed into Zany's eyes, they suddenly turned green and Screwball felt her own eyelids grow heavy. A soothing voice inside her head told her to lay down and sleep. Sleep certainly sounded good right now.

Then another voice screamed: " *Snap out of it!* "

Screwball shook out of her trance. "What the...?"

She then looked at the infant in her hooves, whose mouth was agape in confusion. In realization, she dropped him.

"You're not Zany!"

The baby scowled as he changed form. Screwball gazed up in fear at the queen of the changelings who now stood before her.

"I underestimated your perceptiveness, I'll give you that," Chrysalis grinned. "Though the fact that I have kept the charade this long just shows how good I am!"

Screwball choked on her words. "Where...what have you done with my brother?!"

"He's alive, I assure you. We changelings may be heartless, but we just *love* foals! Your baby brother is quite powerful for his age. I think I will raise him as if he were my own dark prince!"

The young mare gritted her teeth together. "You leave my brother

alone you...you monster!"

Chrysalis put her hoof to her chest, pretending to be offended. "Monster? My, what a hypocrite you are."

Screwball yelled and made a giant hammer appear behind the Queen. It came down hard on her head, but instead of causing damage, it squeaked. Chrysalis snatched the mallet from the air and chuckled.

"Rubber. How adorable!"

"W-what?" Screwball uttered.

She tried casting another spell, but the only result was an explosion of confetti. She tried again, but a sharp pain in her head broke her concentration. Chrysalis made no effort to conceal her laugh.

"It's no use, sweetheart! Since I switched places with your brother, I've been feeding off your love, draining you of your power! Of course, thanks to my son, there wasn't much power left to consume."

Screwball's head shot up. "What?"

"Oh, haven't you guessed? My son was playing you since the day you met."

It was as if the world had crashed down upon the young mare.

"No. No! You're lying!"

"Oh, really? Pitiful girl, you lack so much power now you can't even tell a lie apart from the truth!"

"He wouldn't! He...he..."

"Cares about you?" Chrysalis cackled. "He was only pretending! He was doing exactly as Mummy told him! Yes, the boy was quite useful in my plan. Not only did he drain your power, but if it hadn't been for him, I wouldn't have known about your brother!"

Screwball's mouth was open, but her voice had been stolen from her.

"Unfortunately, my dear," the queen said lowly, "now that you're powerless, you are of no use to me anymore."

A rustling in the bushes snapped the mare out of her shock. She turned to see changelings emerging from the darkness, surrounding her and blocking all routes of escape.

"Feed on whatever she has left!" Chrysalis ordered them. "Then dispose of her, slowly and painfully."

Screwball gasped in alarm. She had to get out of here, she had to find her brother. She closed her eyes and harnessed as much power as she could. It gave her a terrible migraine, but she did not give up.

Just as the changelings were inches away from her, Screwball exploded into confetti. The changelings yelped in confusion.

"What happened, your majesty?" one of them asked.

Chrysalis growled in anger and pointed to half the group. "You lot! Find her and destroy her at once! Search everywhere! If she tells anyone what she has witnessed, my plans will be ruined!"

The changelings saluted and separated for their hunt.

When Screwball arrived at the chocolate lake, she found she could no longer stand. Her strength failed her as she collapsed to the ground. All hope seemed lost for the Princess of Chaos, until a figure appeared before her. She opened her eyes to see the dark silhouette of a changeling, a pair of bright green eyes staring down at her.

Instead of running, her head fell softly to the ground as she drifted into unconsciousness.

Mothball gently stroked her mane. He had been searching for her since her father's mental breakdown. He knew his mother had

gotten to her, for he could feel her power slowly fading away. If she had just escaped, his mother could not be far. He had to get her to safety.

The prince used his magic to levitate the comatose mare onto his back. Fortunately, she was light as a feather.

"Don't worry, Screwy," he whispered. "If it's the last thing I do, I will fix this."

So I've reached 18 chapters, that's more than the first story. Don't worry, this will be all wrapped up soon.

Love Will Find a Way

I don't believe it. I actually updated the next day? That hasn't happened in a while. I had something else in mind for this part of the story, but I decided to take a different direction.

Discord sat sadly on an upside-down tree stump, his head in his hands.

"First my wife," he uttered, "now my children! I should have known! The only creature you can trust is yourself!"

As he spoke, Zany appeared in the air before him, bringing a smile to the draconequus' face.

"Ah, my boy!" he exclaimed, taking the baby in his arms. "You missed your daddy, didn't you? You'll never leave me, right?"

Had he not been caught up in his joy, he would have noticed the devious smile on the infant's face.

Mothball hiked through the forest, carrying the unconscious mare on his back. His ears perked up as he heard a group of changelings nearby and quickly dove into the bushes. Screwball let out a moan. He silenced her with his hoof.

"She must be around here somewhere!" one of the soldiers said. "I smell chocolate milk!"

The prince gulped, but then had an idea. He took the form of a soldier changeling and leapt out of his hiding place.

"You dumb bugs missed her!" he exclaimed, pointing in the direction he had just come. "She went that way!"

One of the changelings sniffed the air. "He's right! The trail is fresh!

We can still catch her!"

As soon as the three were gone, Mothball picked Screwball up and moved as fast as his legs could carry them both. After a while, he came across a strangely decorated hut inside a grand tree. The light was on, so whoever lived there was home.

Maybe they can help, Mothball thought.

He was about to knock on the door when he realized he was still in his changeling guise. No pony would assist him while looking like this. He transformed into the disguise he had used earlier that day with Screwball. He tapped his now gray hoof on the door.

"Who is knocking so late?" a deep female voice called from inside. "I'm coming, please wait!"

A black and white striped pony opened the door.

"Who are you, stranger? Do you not know the danger of being out at night in this forest of fright?"

"Please!" Mothball pleaded. "You have to help me! My friend here, she's..."

The pony's eyes widened at the sight of the unconscious mare. "Screwball! Bring her in, place her on the bed, and tell me why she looks near-dead!"

She guided the disguised prince over to the bed and helped him in setting Screwball down.

"Can you help her?" Mothball begged.

"I can, do not stress, but what caused this sickness?"

He bit his lip. If this mare knew he was a changeling, she would kick him out and keep him away from his Screwball.

"She, um...well..."

"Do not speak!" the pony commanded as she examined her patient.

"She is very weak. I can barely feel her heartbeat. I'll make a soup for her to eat that will help her get well. When she will recover, only time will tell."

Mothball watched curiously as the striped mare searched her shelves of bottles and flasks.

"I've never seen a pony like you before," he observed.

"That's because I'm a zebra, not a pony," she said, turning to him with a bow. "I am Zecora, the one and only."

"Oh. Well how do you know Screwball?"

The zebra answered his question as she pulled a bottle from the shelf. "Seventeen years ago, her mother came to me to seek comfort on what she was about to agree. She chose to be the bride of an evil draconequus, but I told her that if she went, she would find great happiness."

Motball blinked. "You got her parents together?"

Zecora chuckled throatily as she poured the contents of the bottle into a boiling pot of water.

"That, you could say. Oh, I'll never forget that day." She was about to pick up another ingredient when she saw that Mothball was standing with nothing to do. "How rude of me. Would you like some tea?"

He was not a fan of tea, but he did not want to reject the zebra's hospitality. He nodded dumbly.

After mixing several more herbs and spices into the cauldron, Zecora muttered something in a language the prince did not understand. He sipped his tea with disgust, but it did not matter to him. All he could think about was how fragile his friend looked as she lay motionless on the bed beside him. While he held his cup in one hoof, he held Screwball's hoof in the other.

In a few minutes, the soup was ready. Zecora poured a bowl and approached the sick mare.

"Tilt her head back," she said to Mothball.

The prince set down his cup and did as the zebra said. As he gently pushed back Screwball's head, her mouth fell open. The zebra put the bowl to the young mare's lips and slowly poured the soup into her mouth. When she was done, Mothball carefully released Screwball's head and her mouth closed again.

"Is she going to be alright?"

Zecora sighed as she pulled the leopard print blanket over the young mare's body. "I do not know, I fear. For now, she must rest here."

Mothball's eyes glazed over with tears as he laid his hoof on his friend's forehead. "Please get better, Screwy."

The zebra picked up Mothball's cup and examined the tea leaves. Her eyes widened in fascination, her lips curling into a smile.

"How interesting," she murmured.

"What?" the changeling asked, facing the zebra.

Zecora smirked at him. "It was very noble of you to help Screwball, something I would not expect from a changeling, Prince Mothball."

His jaw dropped in surprise.

"I...I don't know what you're talking about!"

The zebra shook her head with a laugh. "You can drop the charade. I promise, you can stay."

He stared at her for a long while and then reluctantly changed back into himself.

"How did you know? Did my eyes give it away?"

"No," Zecora replied, holding out the tea-cup. "The leaves told me all. There is no tricking me, Prince Mothball."

He sighed and slumped to the floor. "Please, it's just Mothball. I'm no prince. I'm a traitor to my kind."

"Yes," Zecora nodded. "You did it because you fell in love with the pony you were supposed to dispose of."

He raised an eyebrow at her. "Are you psychic or something?"

Instead of answering, the zebra gestured for him to sit at the table. He hesitated at the thought of parting from Screwball, but he did as she requested. After a few seconds, Zecora joined him, a stack of cards in her hooves.

"Well, your guess was only half right," Mothball claimed. "Changelings cannot love, let alone fall in love. I don't even have a heart."

"Are you sure?" Zecora asked, tilting her head. "After bringing Screwball here for a cure?"

"She's the only friend I ever had. What was I supposed to do?"

She shook her head. "You are so blind to what made you betray. Let us see what the cards have to say."

She shuffled the deck in her hooves and spread them on the table.

"Take three, and they will tell the past, the present and the future as well."

Mothball shrugged and decided to humor the zebra with her game. He took three from the deck and handed them to Zecora. She set them face-down in the middle and turned over the one on the left.

The card showed a picture of a dark figure with glowing red eyes that made Mothball cringe.

"The Devil," Zecora explained.

"It looks like Screwball's dad."

The zebra threw her head back in a laugh. "This represents the hell

of your past. You've been scolded and harassed. A demon took control of your mind, shaping you to be blind to your heart, quite cleverly. As a result, you have been treated unfairly."

"My mother."

"You see yourself as a demon as well, a monster who belongs in Hell. You think that you are heartless, emotionless and bad. It is these very thoughts that make you sad."

Mothball said nothing. Zecora turned the card in the middle, revealing a white pegasus with red wings, pouring water from one goblet into another.

"Your present involves Temperance," the zebra stated, "a symbol of balance."

"What does that mean?" the prince inquired.

"You have given up your habits as a changeling and have let your true emotions take wing. All your life, you followed your mother. You left that mare for another. The pegasus' wings are red, representing 'desire,' but is white from hoof to head, representing 'purity.' You have combined both with maturity. You are a creature that feeds on love, but now you share it with that dove."

She pointed to Screwball.

"Okay, so I've changed," Mothball admitted, "but I told you, I'm not made to love!"

Zecora sighed. "Of this, you are so sure. Now we will see your future."

The last card had two unicorns, a mare and a colt, staring intensely at each other, their hooves entwined and their horns touching. Above their horns was a glowing pink heart. Zecora smiled at this one.

"The Lovers."

Mothball groaned. "Let me guess."

"When it comes to love, your future is bright. Do you believe now that I am right?"

"These are just a bunch of playing cards. They don't mean anything."

The zebra shook her head again. "That queen has led your thoughts astray. Perhaps I can convince you another way."

She circled the table and without warning, placed Mothball's hoof on her chest.

"Hey, what are you...?"

"What do you feel?" Zecora inquired nonchalantly.

He paused. "Your heart?"

"Indeed. Now come."

As he followed the zebra, Mothball realized something.

"Hey, how come you stopped talking in rhyme?"

Zecora did not answer and pulled the covers off Screwball. She took Mothball's hoof again and laid it on Screwball's chest.

"What do you feel now?"

"Her heart. What does this have to...?"

He was cut off as the zebra moved his hoof to his own chest.

"And now?"

Something thumped wildly against his hoof in a way similar to the thumping inside Screwball and Zecora. He had felt it many times before, but told himself it was nothing but the love he consumed pulsing through him. Then why was it in the exact same place in his chest as in Screwball's and Zecora's?

Where the heart should be?

Mothball looked up at the zebra. "There has to be another explanation. I'm not supposed to have a heart."

"That does not mean you cannot," Zecora stated. "What else could fill that spot? If you are heartless, Mothball, how do you explain your feelings for Screwball?"

The prince looked at the mare in the bed. Some of the color had returned to her cheeks, giving her face a gentle glow. It made him smile to see this, but also sad that she was still not awake.

"I *can't* explain it," he admitted. "The moment I saw her, I was bewitched. Sometimes I wonder if she cast a spell on me, but the more time I spent with her, the more I was compelled to stay with her. I tried not to, because I didn't want to hurt her, but I kept coming back.

"I know she loves me. I've always known. I was supposed to feed off it, but you know something? No matter how much time I spent with her, she never seemed to wither, not in the slightest. I felt her love transfer to me, but her energy never diminished. I began to assume she was immune."

He hung his head. "That was clearly not the case, after what my mother did to her."

Mothball noticed Screwball shivering, so he pulled the covers back over her body.

"I can't stop thinking about her," he continued. "Everything about her: her laugh, her smile, her sense of humor, her hair, her eyes..." He sighed. "Oh, what I would give to see them again. Do you think she'll get better soon?"

When he received no answer, Mothball turned his head. The zebra was no longer behind him.

"Zecora?"

"Do not fear! I am here."

He glanced around the room and found her stirring her cauldron. As

he approached her, Zecora took the tea-cup he had drunk from and dumped the leaves into the boiling water.

"What are you doing now?" Mothball asked, peering inside.

Zecora took some green powder from a jar and blew it into the brew. Green images started to form, making the changeling gasp. Soon he was gazing at two silhouettes, one that resembled Screwball and another himself. The figures embraced each other and bent their bodies in a way that they formed a heart. Suddenly, the image evaporated into thin air and all that remained in the pot was green liquid.

"What was that?" the prince questioned, still in awe.

"That," Zecora replied, "is what happens when two become one, when they possess a magic more powerful than the sun. What you think as a weakness is not so. Strength is what comes with the glow."

"Do you ever give a straight answer?"

"No."

He stared at her and then at Screwball.

"If nothing changes, I could make more stew," the zebra said, "but I'll need some herbs, and help from you."

Mothball turned back to Zecora. "How can I help?"

As Screwball gained consciousness, everything came flooding back: her father's mental breakdown, her unpleasant encounter with Dinky, her mother's supposed betrayal, her brother turning out to be Chrysalis...

Her brother.

"Zany," she murmurred.

She felt something cool on her forehead, causing her to slowly open her eyes.

"Zany," she said again.

"Shhh," a warm voice whispered. "Take it easy, my little filly."

When Screwball's vision came into focus, she saw the zebra smiling over her and pressing a wet cloth to her forehead.

"Zecora?"

"It is good to see you awake. Tell me, does anything ache?"

The young mare groaned. "My head."

Zecora left for a moment and came back with a cup of tea. "Drink this, but not too fast. You lack your strength, but the worst has past."

Screwball struggled to sit up. "How did I get here? How long was I out?"

"For an hour you have been here. It was one of your friends that brought you, dear."

"Really?" she asked, sipping the tea. "Who? Dinky? One of the twins?"

The zebra was about to answer when a voice interrupted her:

"Hey, Zecora! I think I got the things you asked for!"

A gray stallion carrying a saddle bag stood in the doorway. Not knowing Screwball was awake, he transformed into Mothball. The young mare gasped.

" *YOU* !"

The changeling turned in alarm, but then smiled. "You're awake! Thank goodness!"

Screwball looked accusingly at Zecora. "How could you let him in here?! Do you have any idea who he is?!"

"He is the one who saved your life," the zebra replied. "I do not know why this causes you strife."

"Humph!" the mare huffed. "Saved my life, my hoof! What happened, your highness? Didn't want to lose your primary food source?!"

Mothball's grin had faded. "What are you talking about?"

"Don't play dumb! You've been using me all this time! You told your mother all my secrets! You betrayed me! I thought you were my friend!"

The prince was confused. "Screwy, let me explain..."

"I *trusted* you!"

"Screwball, please lie down..." Zecora started to say.

"No!" she screamed. "I won't be in the same room with him!"

Suddenly, the pillows flew off the bed and zoomed toward Mothball. He managed to duck in time.

"Screwy, please!" he begged.

But the mare was already up and running toward the door.

"You don't have the strength!" Zecora yelled.

Mothball moved in front of the mare. "The changelings are looking for you! It's not safe out there!"

Screwball scowled at him. "I don't care, so long as I'm away from *you* !"

She pushed him back and raced outside. She did not know where she was going. She just wanted to get as far away from him as possible. And yet, her heart was telling her to go back, but she would not listen. She did not trust her heart anymore.

It did not take long for her to run out of breath. She had gained some

strength during her rest, but not enough to teleport. She panted with thirst and then spotted a river nearby.

As she knelt down for a drink, she caught her reflection, making her pause. The mare in the water looked just like her, only paler and...broken.

She sobbed. "This is all my fault. If I hadn't been so foolish, if I had listened to Daddy, none of this would've happened. I'd still be at home with my family, my friends...Zany."

Her little brother was her deepest regret. The poor infant had done nothing wrong, and yet he was paying the price for her actions.

Screwball shook her head. "No, this...this was all Mothball! He...he tricked me!"

If that was the case, then why could she not stop thinking about how hurt he had looked when she had rushed out? For that matter, why had he brought her to Zecora's in the first place? Why had he not taken her to Chrysalis?

Why did her heart still ache at the thought of him?

She looked at her reflection again and splashed the water furiously.

"I don't know what to think anymore!" she bawled.

She buried her face in her hooves, not hearing Mothball as he came out of the trees.

He looked at her with sad eyes, wanting to wrap his forelegs around her and assure her everything was alright. She had every right to be upset with him and he could not help but feel guilty.

He had to let her know how he felt, but he was not sure how. He was not disguised as a pony with nothing to lose. He was his changeling self. After what he had done, would she believe him?

He thought back to the night of the Grand Galloping Gala, when they had danced together. She had looked so beautiful. He then realized that at some point that night, he had fallen utterly and completely in

love with her.

Then he remembered that song and how strangely the lyrics fit their relationship. This gave him an idea. It was corny, but it was the only way he knew how to express himself.

He started to sing: " *In a very unusual way...* "

Screwball's head shot up at the sound of his voice.

" *One time I needed you.* "

She turned to him as he cautiously approached. Her instincts told her to run, but her heart kept her in place.

Mothball gulped as he continued: " *In a very unusual way, you were my friend.* "

Screwball raised an eyebrow at him, slightly confused about why he was singing. It was not the sweetest of voices, and there was nervousness in his tone, but it was not horrible.

" *Maybe it lasted a day,*

Maybe it lasted an hour,

But somehow it will never end. "

He held out his hoof, but she turned away. Mothball was hurt, but he would not give up.

" *In a very unusual way,*

I think I'm in... "

He choked on this word.

" *I think I'm in...* "

Screwball faced him again, her eyes wide. She remembered this song from the Gala, along with the next lyric.

Could it be?

Mothball was struggling so hard, he skipped the verse altogether, and the one after.

" *In a very unusual way...* "

He reached out his hoof again. This time, she let him touch her.

" *I owe what I am to you.* "

Screwball turned the rest of her body as he laid both his hooves on her shoulders.

" *Though at times it appears I won't stay,*

I never go. "

She wanted to keep listening, but her mind took control and she wrenched herself out of his grasp. She walked away with her head down, but Mothball was determined not to lose her again. He sang louder and with more passion:

" *Special to me in my life...* "

Screwball stopped in her tracks.

" *Since the first day that I met you.* "

She slowly turned her head back to him.

" *How could I ever forget you*

Once you had touched my soul? "

She was now looking directly into his emerald eyes.

" *In a very unusual way...* "

They were so sincere, so sad, so desperate, in a way no creature could possibly fake.

" *You've made me...whole.* "

She did not need her power to see the truth in them.

Screwball turned fully toward him. He extended his foreleg to her.

"I love you, Screwy."

The young mare could not contain her emotion any longer and did not hesitate to rush into his embrace.

You've seen the pony tarot cards, right? Yes, I was thinking of *The Lion King 2.* I didn't use "Love Will Find a Way," because Screwball's supposed to be upset with Mothball.

I love writing Zecora so much, especially after meeting Brenda Crichlow at BronyCon! Eek!

We Are One

I hadn't realized how long it's been since I updated! Am I ever going to finish this?!

This was kind of rushed, so sorry if it lacks detail.

"I never wanted any part of Mother's plan," Mothball explained.

He and Screwball were sitting at Zecora's table, eating soup with one hoof and holding hooves with the other. Well, Screwball was the only one eating anyway, since Mothball was not accustomed to solid food.

"But what was I supposed to do?" he continued. "I was young, I had nowhere else to go. The hive is the only home I've ever known. The changelings never really felt like family, but..."

"I get it," Screwball said, giving his hoof a gentle squeeze. "No matter how crazy they are, you can't pick family." She hung her head. "And sometimes, you'd do anything to please them."

"Part of what my mother told you is true, though. I was supposed to feed off your love, but...I couldn't bear to hurt you. Eventually, I kept away from you altogether."

"It's funny. You keep saying that the more time I spend with you, the weaker I get, but the thing is..." She put down her spoon and scooted closer to him. "When I'm with you, I feel...stronger."

"You *do* feel stronger. I still don't understand how that's possible."

"Perhaps I can explain," Zecora volunteered, "why she feels no pain." She held up the card 'Temperance.' "I spoke to you of balancing your traits. There is more to what this card dictates. You gain power from Screwball's love, it's true, but from your love, she gains power too. What you give replaces what you take. 'Tis such a

rare magic that you two make."

"So what you're saying is," Mothball attempted to clarify, "that instead of me taking away her power, we're...sharing our own?"

The zebra nodded.

"It makes sense," Screwball declared. "Love is the most powerful form of chaos there is." She smirked. "But I thought you didn't have a heart, you big softie."

"So did I," the prince said. "But Zecora told me something interesting. If I were heartless like my mother, I would have left you for dead." He gazed into her eyes. "But I didn't."

Screwball smiled and nuzzled her head into his chest. "I'm sorry I doubted you."

He grinned nervously. "Well, you had reason."

She slowly pulled away and looked at him seriously. "What else do you know about Chrysalis' plan?"

He sighed. "The night of the Gala, when I returned to the hive, Mother demanded I tell her everything I had learned from you. I refused, but then she threatened to hurt you, so..." He turned his head away in shame. "I told her. That's how she knew that you could see through lies and that you had a baby brother. She replaced him before you returned from Canterlot.

"He's alive, as far as I know. He's being held in the hive's nursery. Changelings find babies to be..." he winced, "a bountiful food source, because in their innocent age, they tend to love everything and everyone. I would have rescued him, but I scarcely escaped from the hive myself. I tried to warn you about Chrysalis in the park today, but I couldn't risk revealing myself to her."

Screwball's eyes were wild with worry. "Why is she doing this?"

"She wants revenge on your father. What for, I'm not sure, but this was all so she could get him back into stone. With him out of the way, and his power transferred to Chrysalis, the changelings would

be free to take over Equestria!"

He shook his head. "She had it all planned out! She even got two changelings to kiss in front of your father, posing as your mother and another stallion to get him angry!"

Screwball's jaw dropped. "I *knew* Mom would never betray us!" She gasped. "Mom! Oh, she's probably gonna ground me for life after this! She might... No, she would never let Daddy be turned to stone."

"My mother figured that, which is why she also planned to pose as Discord and act so evil that your mother and the other bearers of the Elements of Harmony would have no choice but to turn him to stone. Once that's done, she intends to dispose of them so that nothing can stop her!"

"Oh no! What if it's already been done? What if we're too late?"

As she spoke, a frog crossed with a teapot hopped onto the windowsill. Its lid opened as it croaked.

"I think your dad's alive," Mothball observed.

"But we might not have much time!" Screwball exclaimed. "We have to warn him! We have to save Zany! We need to explain things to..."

"No," Zecora said. "You have not fully recovered, and you cannot risk being discovered."

"But if I wait too long, it'll be too late!"

"Your father is crafty, clever and cunning. He will sense the ponies coming. It will take time for them to hunt him down. I suggest you rest till morning comes round."

"But..."

She trailed off as Mothball laid a hoof on her shoulder. "She's right. You need your strength if you want to go up against my mother." He hung his head. "I wouldn't recommend it though. My mother is clever too, not to mention she has a whole army on her side."

"I don't care! My family's fallen apart and I have to help put it together again!"

"You'll need a plan first."

"Yes," Screwball said with a sigh. "I'm sorry, my mind is so jumbled right now!"

"You should get some sleep."

"Yeah. Zecora, do you have a sleeping bag or something?"

"You are welcome to sleep in my bed," the zebra offered. "I will find a place to rest my head."

"Oh, Zecora, really. You've done so much for my family already. I don't want to..."

"Nonsense. You both need your rest. For that, the bed would be best."

"But where can I...?" Mothball started to ask.

He trailed off as Zecora winked at him. He was silent as she gathered the empty teacups and disappeared behind a curtain. Screwball and Mothball simultaneously glanced at the bed and then at each other with a blush.

"I suppose there will be no harm in..." Screwball stammered, "snuggling?"

In a few minutes, they were lying under the covers, tight in each other's embrace, their hooves entwining. They were careful not to do anything...inappropriate, but Screwball tried to get a kiss from her love. Mothball leaned his head back in hesitation.

"Come on," Screwball groaned. "We already know you won't hurt me."

"Yeah, but...I...I just don't want to risk it. At least, not now when you're not your strongest."

She sighed in disappointment. "Fine."

On that note, she turned her body away from him.

"I didn't mean it like that!" Mothball insisted. "I mean...now that we know how...different I am with you...I just...don't know what will happen!"

She faced him again. "Why don't we find out?"

He stared into her pleading spirals. He wanted to kiss her so badly, but he could not risk hurting her.

"Some other day," he said.

She sighed again and gazed up at the ceiling. He looked in the same direction and for a while, neither of them said anything.

"Did you know?" Screwball asked abruptly.

Mothball raised an eyebrow at her. "Did I know what?"

She locked eyes with him. "Did you know how I felt about you?"

He looked away shamefully. "I can sense emotion a mile away. I've always known."

"Why didn't you say anything?" Her tone was sounding angry now.

"Because I thought I couldn't return your feelings. And...I didn't want you to think I was just staying with you so I could feed."

Screwball could understand that, considering how she had treated him earlier.

"Sorry," she apologized again. "Also...I never properly thanked you for saving my life."

That made her feel even more guilty.

"That's okay," Mothball said with a shrug. "I never thanked you."

"For what?"

"For saving *me* ...from myself." He winced. "Okay, that was cheesy."

Screwball laughed. "I love you anyway."

She took his hoof and snuggled against him again. He smiled and stroked her mane. Even though he had always known it, hearing her say those three words warmed his heart, which he supposedly had.

"What I mean is...I always thought I was a heartless creature who didn't deserve love of any kind, until I met you. Not only that, but you showed me what it's like to have fun, to be crazy, to be...well, a kid."

She smiled. "How long have you been in love with me?"

"I was bewitched the moment I saw you. What I don't get is why you love *me* ."

"When we first met, you were so different that I found you interesting. I knew you weren't as bad as Daddy said, because you tried to save me from that manticore. I...I can't really explain it, but...I just feel so...complete with you."

Screwball sighed contentedly as he wrapped his hooves around her.

"I feel the same way."

She was so happy that she finally had her prince, but her heart sank at the thought of her family.

"I have to make things right," she whispered.

Mothball shook his head. "It's hopeless. There's no stopping my mother."

"She was stopped before at Cadence and Shining Armor's wedding."

"Huh?"

Screwball raised an eyebrow. "You mean your mother never told you about that?"

"If she was defeated, I don't think she would have."

"Well, basically, what happened is that Princess Cadence and Shining Armor cast a spell that banished the changelings from Equestria. But they're all the way in the Crystal Empire now! By the time they hear about Chrysalis, it'll be too late!"

"What kind of spell did they cast?"

"I...I don't remember. My mom told me a long time ago, right after I met you, but I don't remember. I just know they cast it together and not even Chrysalis could fight it."

"That must have been some spell."

"If only I could remember..."

"We'll worry about it in the morning. For now, let's get some sleep."

As they held each other, Mothball could feel her love transfer to his body, but he could also feel his love going to her in return.

So he could not hurt her, but that did not make up for the fact that he was the Changeling Prince. He had to prove his loyalty, not just to her but to everyone.

He had to clean up the mess he had caused, and he knew exactly how.

When Screwball awoke, she was alone. Her hoof went to the empty space beside her.

"Mothball?"

She stepped out of bed and looked around the hut. Her eyes fell upon a note on the table:

Stepped out for a moment, will be back before evening. MB

A few minutes after Screwball had read the letter, Zecora returned

with a plate of scrambled eggs.

"Let me guess," the young mare said. "Daddy made it rain eggs."

The zebra shook her head. "No, my dear Screwball. In fact, they were pouring from the waterfall."

"Typical."

The two waited hours for Mothball to return, untill Screwball grew impatient.

"Where could he possibly be?" she demanded, slamming her hoof on the table.

"Hush, my dear," Zecora said sternly. "You must have patience. It's not like we've been waiting for ages."

"But what is he doing?! Can't you look in your magic brew or something?"

The zebra rubbed her chin. "I will see what I can do. Hand me that jar of dust, would you?"

After Screwball handed her the jar, Zecora scooped up the green powder and blew it into the cauldron. As she said a few words, an image began to form in the brew. Screwball peered inside and saw the silhouettes of six mares she knew well. She gasped as she started hearing voices.

"His twenty-four hours are up," said the voice of Princess Twilight. "I'm sorry it had to come to this, Fluttershy."

"No!" cried Fluttershy's voice. "Just a little more time! Please!"

"You could try to reason with him once more, but it must be done. Come on, girls. Let's find Discord."

As the image disintegrated, Screwball felt a wave of panic.

"No! They're going to do it! They're going to turn Daddy to stone!"

The filly rushed to the door.

"Where are you going?" Zecora demanded.

"I have to warn him! Or, if I find Mom first, I'll explain things to her! I have to fix this! When Mothball gets back, tell him where I've gone!"

The zebra was about to protest further when Screwball slammed the door.

Mothball hid behind a dead tree so the changelings guarding the entrance to the hive would not see him. For a second, he considered turning back. Suppose he were caught, or worse, if his mother caught him! She would do worse than ground him! She would blast him to dust!

Then he remembered Screwball and the promise he made. He had to prove he could keep that promise and that his love was sincere. The task was dangerous, but he would face a thousand changelings for Screwball!

Under the circumstances, that might be exactly what he would have to do.

The prince closed his eyes and took the form of a nurse changeling.

"I hope my smell doesn't throw them off," he muttered to himself.

The guards did not appear to be suspicious, which was a great relief to Mothball, but the most difficult part of the task was yet to come. He took the passage to the lower level of the hive where the nursery was. He immediately caught sight of the gray foal lying in a cocoon shaped like a cradle. Despite the number of changelings surrounding him, the infant was laughing and clapping his hooves. The changelings, in the meantime, were feeding off his unconditional love.

Now what? The prince had to think of a way to get the child out of there without arousing suspicion. He cleared his throat.

"Ahem."

The changelings turned to him.

"Her majesty," he stammered, "would like...the child...to be...brought to Ponyville! She wishes to...show him off to Discord."

The group murmured amongst themselves in confusion.

"Why would she do that," one said, "when she is disguised as the child at the moment?"

Mothball bit his lip. "Uh...well...she wants to..."

Then he grunted. "Oh, to heck with it!"

His horn glowed and the changelings scattered as he blasted open the cocoon. The baby applauded, as if wanting him to do it again. Mothball swept the baby in his hooves and felt its love transfer to him.

He's actually kind of cute, he thought with a smile.

"Stay where you are!"

The prince looked up and saw that he was surrounded by soldier changelings.

Sorry to end it so abruptly, but the next chapter is going to have a lot more to it.

No, they didn't DO anything!

Armageddon

This chapter was getting to be longer than I thought, so I split it into two. Hopefully the next one will be completed soon. I've been told that many of my action scenes end too abruptly, so I hope I did better on this.

P.S. You're going to hate me for this chapter.

P.P.S. The first episode of "Bride of Discord" is out now! You can find it on YouTube!

He was in his castle. Fluttershy stood at the door, pulling on her cape.

"Do you really have to go?" Discord asked.

The pegasus smiled. "I'm only going out for the night, honey. After all, it's not every night Twilight comes to town. We haven't had a Girl's Night in ages!"

"Yes, but..." He twaddled his fingers. "I thought we could...have a You-and-Me Night."

He glanced down sadly. Then he felt Fluttershy's soft hoof lift his chin so his eyes could meet hers. While her Stare could never manipulate him in the way it did animals, her loving gaze would always warm his heart. Then she gently kissed him on the muzzle.

"Tell you what," she said. "Tomorrow, we can drop Screwball off at Derpy's for a sleepover and then we'll spend the whole night together. How does that sound?"

His lips slowly curled into a smile and he nodded.

"Besides," Fluttershy continued, "it's not like you'll be alone."

As if on cue, a four-year-old Screwball appeared between them.

"Mommy, Mommy!" she chimed. "Can you read me a bedtime story?"

"Sorry, honey," the pegasus said, taking the filly in her arms. "Mommy has to leave now."

"Where are you going?"

"Out with your aunts. I will be back before morning." She kissed her daughter on the forehead. "Be good for your father, now."

"I will, Mommy."

Once she was gone, Discord sunk onto the couch. Young Screwball tapped his leg.

"Why Daddy sad?"

The draconequus looked down at the sweet filly's spiral eyes. They were filled with concern, yet still adorable. Smiling slightly, he lifted the toddler onto his knee.

"Daddy just misses Mommy, that's all."

Screwball nodded in understanding. Discord looked up as he felt chocolate milk drip onto his head. He grinned when he saw it falling from a cotton candy cloud. He scooted out of the way and made a glass appear to catch the milk.

"Feel better?" Screwball asked.

He turned to the filly and squeezed her in the crook of his arm. "Yes, dear. Feel better."

The scene shifted and Discord found himself in the garden. He glanced around at the greenery.

"Alright!" he called. "Where are you?"

He heard a laugh and spun around. Screwball, now a teenager, was peering out from behind a tree.

"Aha!"

She gasped and teleported out of her position.

"You can run, but you can't hide!"

He was about to look for his daughter when he heard another giggle, this one delicate and enchanting. He grinned mischievously and moved as quietly as possible towards the sound. He then spied a spot of pink behind a bush. Chuckling to himself, he teleported to that spot and surprised Fluttershy as he scooped her up in his arms.

"You're it," he whispered.

Fluttershy groaned. "We need to make a new set of rules for this game."

"Rules? My dear, have you forgotten who you married?"

He then brought his lips down upon hers. She moaned in response.

"Do you guys have to do that every time you catch each other?"

The couple pulled away to see Screwball scowling at them, a two-month-old Zany in her arms.

"Then again," the draconequus said, "we *should* have a new set of rules, like when the tagged creature kisses some pony, they're *both* 'It!'"

"Wait, what?"

Screwball cried out as her parents pulled her and Zany in for a group hug. They began laughing and the children could not resist laughing along as they tightened their embrace.

The image rippled as Discord woke from his dream. He sat up and realized he had fallen asleep on one of his clouds. He looked down and saw Zany cuddled up beside him. He smiled at the infant's innocent face and petted his pink mane.

That pink mane...

It was just like Fluttershy's.

Zany's eyes then opened, revealing his spiral eyes. If they were purple, they would be just like Screwball's.

Discord recalled the memories from his dream.

"Those were the days," he muttered.

Since he had fallen in love with her, Fluttershy had always brought joy to his miserable existence. The birth of Screwball had doubled that joy. They were a family. They loved each other, comforted each other when troubled. Sure, they had had their ups and downs, but they would always work it out in the end.

Why could it not be that way again?

He knew the answer. Fluttershy had broken his heart.

Since their marriage, there had scarcely been a day without Fluttershy. Even when she was not there, she would never be gone for long. Now that he thought about it, this was the longest they had been apart. There had been another time when they had parted under dark circumstances. During her captivity, he had nearly forced her into marriage and in his anger had physically harmed her. Then he released her and did not see her again for three days.

This was different. This time, she was not coming back. Why would she? After all, it was clear by the way she had kissed that stallion that she did not love him as she had before. It had destroyed him.

No one had told him that love did not always last forever.

Then there was Screwball: his daughter, his flesh and blood, his chaotic protégé. She was no different from her mother.

She had left him too, obviously not caring how he felt about it. She and her mother were probably in the home of that stallion, rejoicing at how they had broken the Lord of Chaos.

Discord shook his head. No, he was *not* broken! He was more powerful than any pony in Equestria!

"Look at the world I've created!"

He did so and thought it would prove that he was not weak, but as soon as he laid eyes on the chaotic town, his heart sank. It was all so beautiful, but who was there to appreciate it?

He glanced down at Zany who was smiling up at him with an open mouth. He at least had him.

"But you're a foal," he whispered. "You'll appreciate anything."

He put his paw to his heart. It was beating slower than usual and he could hear a string snap.

He had told his family time and time again that love was the most powerful form of chaos there was. How ironic it was that the very thing he lived for would ultimately destroy him.

"There he is!"

His ears perked up at the sound of Princess Twilight's voice. He looked down at the ground. The six bearers of the Elements of Harmony were directly below him, but the only pony he really saw was Fluttershy. While the others were glaring up at him angrily, her eyes were sad and pleading as he locked gaze with her.

Despite everything that had occurred the last two days, despite the tension between them, he still thought her the most beautiful thing in the world.

"Are you listening to me?"

Discord had been so focused on his wife that he had not heard Twilight's words.

"I said: your twenty-four hours are up!"

He scratched his head. "Twenty-four hours?"

"Yeah! And I see you're still causing chaos!"

Still confused, he picked up Zany and flew down to them. "Did I miss

something?"

"Yes!" Rainbow Dash exclaimed. "Your sanity!"

"We will give you one more chance, Discord," Twilight said. "Unless you stop this madness now, we'll have no choice but to use our Elements."

Discord's eyes widened in fear and then tuned to Fluttershy. "You...you're letting them...do this?"

The pegasus hung her head shamefully. "I thought you had changed, but I was wrong."

He could not believe it. True, she had betrayed him, but he never would have thought she would be so cold as to turn him to stone! He shivered at the memory of his stone prison. He would be frozen forever. He would be alone in the cold. He would hear the world around him and not be a part of it. Fluttershy knew all this. Which is why he had to ask:

"Why, Fluttershy? Why?! What have I done to drive you away?! Was I a bad husband? Did I offend you? Was it because I yelled at Screwball? Because I apologized for that!"

"Hey," Applejack said, glancing around. "Where *is* Screwball?"

Discord bit his lip. "She...she...she's making cream cheese in Fillydelphia."

He could not tell them that Screwball had abandoned him. If he did, they would know that she hated him and would not care if he were turned to stone. But the fact that she was not with her mother worried him.

"Please, Discord," Fluttershy pleaded, stepping forth. "It doesn't have to be this way. We can go home, be a family, like we should. Be the stallion I fell in love with, the stallion I married, the stallion with whom I raised my children."

Her beautiful teal eyes were now stained with tears. "Discord, please..."

He wanted to do what she asked, to take her in his arms, but the memory of seeing her with that other stallion still burned in his mind.

"If you love me so much," he snapped, "why did you betray me?!"

"I didn't!" Fluttershy insisted. "It was..."

"If you love me so much, why do you still take their side?"

"Discord, please listen..."

"You would turn *me* to stone? Your husband?" He held up Zany. "The father of this child!"

Suddenly, the baby vanished from his hands and then reappeared on Fluttershy's back. Discord's hands fell to his sides.

" *Et tu,* Zany?" he choked.

His wife, his daughter and now his son. Whatever was left of his shattered heart was destroyed in that moment. He fell to his knees in defeat.

What was there left to live for?

The six mares tilted their heads in confusion.

"Well," Discord uttered, lifting his eyes slightly. "What are you waiting for? Do it."

"Discord..." Fluttershy started to say.

"I said DO IT!"

She gasped, but then hung her head. Twilight turned to her sympathetically, though it was clear she was equally shocked.

"I'm sorry, Fluttershy," she whispered.

The six mares had used the Elements of Harmony multiple times, but this time, neither of them were willing to do it. Zany grinned evilly as Twilight's horn began to glow. Discord looked up at Fluttershy who had tears streaming down her cheeks.

He would not take his eyes off her, not even to blink. Despite the fact that she was crying, he wanted her beautiful face to be the last thing he would see.

"Fluttershy, I love you," he said under his breath.

He gripped his hands, preparing for what was to come.

"WAIT!"

Twilight stopped her spell and looked up. Everyone did the same. Screwball zoomed overhead and landed between her father and the ponies.

"You can't do this!"

"Screwball, sweetie," Twilight said gently. "Stand back."

"No! This is all a big mistake!"

"Honey, please..." Discord urged, not wanting his daughter to share his fate.

"Daddy! It wasn't Mom you saw kissing that stallion! It was a changeling! They both were!"

The draconequus' jaw dropped. "What?"

"Yes!" Fluttershy shouted. "It's true! I would *never* betray you, Discord!"

"But...but...why were you going to turn me to stone? Didn't you want me out of the way so you could run off with that stallion?"

"It wasn't going to be forever! We were just going to put you in a time-out! I didn't want to, but after the way you acted yesterday, talked about ruling Equestria, I...I felt I had no choice!"

"What are you talking about? I didn't say anything to you about ruling Equestria!"

"That was Chrysalis!" Screwball declared.

Twilight raised an eyebrow. "How do you know?"

The filly pointed at Zany. "Why don't you as her yourself?"

The ponies gasped and turned to the baby. Its eyes were blazing with green fire. Fluttershy shrieked and dropped him as he started to grow. Everyone backed away as it took the form of Chrysalis. She growled at Screwball.

"You really are a thorn in my side, you know that?"

"It *is* her!" Applejack cried.

Discord grabbed Fluttershy and Screwball and pulled them closer, his teeth bared at the Changeling Queen.

"What have you done with my boy?!" he demanded.

"Doesn't matter!" Chrysalis bellowed. "What you should really worry about is yourselves, as I put Plan B into action!"

She whistled and everyone looked up as a swarm of changelings filled the sky.

Discord laughed. "You think a few bugs will stop me?"

He snapped his fingers, teleporting himself and the ponies.

"Ha!" Discord said when they reappeared. "I sure showed her, didn't...?"

He gasped and saw that Chrysalis was still in front of him. They had only travelled a few inches. The queen threw her head back in a laugh.

"You foal!" she taunted. "While I was disguised as your son, I fed off your love! Whatever power you had left was wasted on chocolate rain!"

"No!" the draconequus cried, looking down at his paw and claw. "It's not possible!"

"Big mistake, Chrysalis!" Twilight exclaimed, powering her horn. "You're going back to the Changeling Forest where you belong!"

Just as the magic was about to transfer to her crown, Twilight's horn vanished.

"W-what?" she gasped. "H-how? W-why...WHY DOES THIS ALWAYS HAPPEN TO ME?!"

"I have absorbed Discord's power," Chrysalis chuckled, "as well as his daughter's. Now that you cannot use magic, nothing can stop me now!"

Pinkie narrowed her eyes. "You're not a very nice lady!"

"Really? I hadn't noticed."

They were now surrounded by changelings, in the air and on the ground. Chrysalis circled her victims.

"I've been waiting to get revenge on the lot of you for years!" she gloated. "It's a pity that Princess Cadence and Shining Armor aren't here to join the party, but I'll see to them later. I've watched you all in your perfect little lives and well...they were just *too* perfect! So I spiced things up a little."

Twilight faced the queen. "What are you talking about?"

"Oh, haven't you guessed?"

She gasped and spun around at the sound of her own voice and saw a duplicate of herself.

"It was I who told your boyfriend all those years ago that he was nothing but a peasant."

The alicorn stiffened. "What?"

Chrysalis turned back into herself. "That was all I did, of course. It was you who refused to talk things over with him. Shame, really. He had bought a ring for you, too."

Twilight clutched her heart. All that time, she had thought the reason Flash had left her was because he did not see how a relationship between a princess and a guard would work out. With all that talk of formalities, it had seemed the most reasonable, though it had not made sense since that had been the situation with her brother and foalsitter.

Now that she knew the real reason, she felt a weight of guilt on her shoulders.

"Flash," she uttered.

Chrysalis smirked and loomed over the white unicorn. "Your love life, Miss Rarity, was not so hard to ruin."

Rarity gasped as the queen transformed into Fleur-de-lils.

"I didn't even have to kiss him to make you angry," she said in her new voice. "But of course, I had to do it when you decided to go back to him. Oh, how he resisted me. He would not stop telling me how much he cared about you! If only you had listened to him."

The unicorn mimicked Twilight's gesture, tears forming in her eyes.

After turning into the queen, the changeling turned to Applejack.

"I was going to take Rarity's form and rekindle your Spikey-Wikey's old flame, but I had to keep your friendship with the unicorn stable if you were going to turn Discord to stone."

"That was all you?" Twilight asked in disbelief.

"Indeed."

"I don't get it," Screwball said. "I mean I get why you're mad at them, because they helped defeat you and all, but why pick on my dad?"

The Changeling Queen darted her eyes at the filly. "So he'll know what it's like to have a broken heart!"

Without warning, she shot a beam at Discord, sending him flying back into a floating cottage. Berry Punch stuck her head out the

window to see what was going on. Once she did, she slammed the shutters.

"Dad!" Screwball cried.

"Do what you like with the others!" Chrysalis commanded her army. "The draconequus is mine!"

The filly narrowed her eyes. "Not if I can help it!"

With a great shout, she pounced onto the queen. Chrysalis yelped in surprise, but did not let her guard down.

"You little brat!"

Using her magic, she threw the filly off. Screwball landed within the crowd of changelings.

"Screwball!" Fluttershy shrieked, flying into the air. "Hang on, sweetie! Mommy's coming!"

"Stop her!" Chrysalis yelled.

"Oh no, you don't!" Rainbow Dash exclaimed.

Just as several changelings were about to apprehend Fluttershy, Rainbow whizzed through them, knocking them over like bowling pins.

"Hold your ground, girls!" Twilight commanded her friends. "Fight them off as best you can!"

The cyan pegasus pounded her hooves together. "Bring it on!"

She let out a battle cry as she charged the changelings. She stopped in her tracks before she could kick her youngest daughter.

"Prism?" Rainbow questioned.

The filly blinked up at her and then smiled deviously. Rainbow realized the truth too late when Prism delivered a right-hook. Fluttershy caught her friend in the air.

"Don't let them distract you!" Twilight shouted. "Remember, they're just changelings!"

"Oh, really?"

The alicorn turned and gasped at the sight of her ex-boyfriend.

"It wasn't a changeling who broke your heart, Princess," the fake Flash Sentry said with a smirk. " *I* was the one who said it was over."

Twilight shrieked as she backed into another changeling disguised as Flash.

"But even after all those years," it said, "you wouldn't even talk to me."

" *I* said it was over," said a third Flash.

"But *you* agreed with me," said another.

Twilight tried to get away, but more and more Flashes appeared and were slowly closing in on her. She wanted to block their words out and fight, but they looked and sounded so much like Flash...

"Don't listen to them, Twilight!" Applejack called out. "They're lyin'!"

"And Heaven forbid they do that!"

The cowgirl gulped at the sound of her beloved dragon's voice. Soon all the changelings around her looked like Spike.

"It's funny how you're always so intent on telling the truth..." one said.

"...but it took you forever to confess your feelings for me!" the other finished with a cackle.

"Why, if you hadn't told me, I would've married Rarity!"

"But if you really want the truth, AJ..."

"...even though I'm married to you..."

"...you'll never be as pretty..."

"...as classy..."

"...as sophisticated as Rarity!"

"That's what's always been nagging at your brain, huh?"

"The fact that I loved Rarity..."

"...first!"

Applejack covered her ears. "No! It's not true! Y'all are lyin'! Spike loves me! He may have loved Rarity first, but he chose me!"

"You sure it was because he loved you?"

"Or were you just a last resort?"

The last changeling to speak screamed as he was blasted with magic. Rarity blew on her horn.

"The nerve!" she exclaimed. "Making dear, sweet Spikey-Wikey seem like a monster!"

"And you say *I'm* unfaithful!"

Rarity turned and saw several changelings take the form of Fancy Pants.

"You still hold that dragon in high esteem..." one said.

"...and yet you accuse *me* of adultery!" another finished.

"Then again, you might be right about that."

"After all, I didn't tell you where I was going that day..."

"And I didn't bother defending myself when you caught me in her embrace!"

"Honestly, my dear, you became boring after a while."

"Always talking about Ponyville!"

"You couldn't even give me a son!"

"Stop it!" Rarity shouted desperately. "My Fancy Pants would never say such vulgar things!"

The one directly behind her smirked. "Maybe not to your face."

The unicorn cried out and blasted as many changelings as she could, but they kept coming, shouting insults at her. Rainbow Dash decided to lend a hoof and bowled through the crowd. The pegasus hesitated when the changeling beneath her turned into Prism.

"You wouldn't hit your own daughter, would you?" it said, smiling up innocently.

Before Rainbow Dash could respond, she was attacked from behind by copies of Soarin and the twins. Meanwhile, Pinkie was grinning at a duplicate of Red Shoes.

She snorted with laughter. "Oh, if Red were here now! He would get a kick out of this!"

The changeling tilted its head and then took the form of Blueberry Pie. Pinkie only snorted again.

"I *love* that trick of yours! Ooh! Do me! Do me!"

The changeling groaned. "Forget this!"

Then it tackled her to the ground. Through all of this, Fluttershy had been pushing through the army, searching for her daughter.

"Screwy!" she called. "Screwy, where are you?"

"Mom!"

Fluttershy saw her daughter running towards her. Her relief was short-lived when a second Screwball cut between them.

"Mom, stop! It's a trick! I'm the real Screwball!"

"No, you're not!" the first Screwball insisted. " *I* am!"

"No, *I* am!" said a third Screwball.

"I'm Screwball!"

" *I'm* Screwball!"

"No, *I'm* Spartacus!" Pinkie Pie shouted.

Once Chrysalis was convinced that her army had everything under control, she advanced toward her enemy. The draconequus was recovering from his collision, rubbing his head while attempting to rise.

"At last," the queen said. "You're mine!"

She cried out as she was hit with a ball of golden light.

"Guess again, Queenie!" Discord said. "I still have some power left!"

While the queen was composing herself, Discord scanned the crowd for his family. He spotted his wife in the center of a circle of Screwballs. By the way she was quivering, it was no doubt that she was the real Fluttershy.

"Mom, you have to listen to me!" one of the Screwballs cried desperately. "It's really me!"

"She's lying!" another one insisted. "I'm the real one!"

"No, I am!"

Fluttershy glanced frantically at all the Screwballs. "Oh, which one is it? I don't know!"

Discord dove into the center and swept her up. He held out his paw to the army of clones.

"Hold it!"

The Screwballs all quieted down.

"Okay, there's only one way to find out who the real Screwball is!"

He cleared his throat and sang:

" *Oh simple spawn of mine*

Without you, I would be so lost

You have stuck by my side... "

Most of the clones looked at him in confusion, but one smiled and finished the line:

" *No matter what the tragic cost.* "

Discord grinned and took the filly in his other arm.

"That's my girl!"

The changelings scowled and charged the trio, but Discord was quick and teleported out of the way, causing their attackers to collide. They reappeared only a few feet away, but at least they were concealed behind a hay cart.

"I'm so sorry," Discord said finally.

"Me too," Fluttershy said, taking his paw.

"Now's not the time!" Screwball declared, ducking as a changeling flew overhead.

Her father nodded. "Right. You two stay here. Keep each other safe. I'll take care of Chrysalis."

"What? Dad, I can fight!"

"No! I lost you girls once! I'm not going to lose you again!"

"But..."

"Listen to your father, honey," Fluttershy said before turning to her husband. "Be careful."

"I will," Discord uttered.

But Screwball still protested. "You're not strong enough, Dad! She'll kill you!"

He kissed her on the forehead. "I'll be fine."

Then he turned to his wife and Screwball saw the sorrow pass between their eyes. A tear fell down his cheek as Discord laid his hands on his love's shoulders and pulled her in for a long, desperate kiss. Fluttershy clung to him, never wanting to let go.

It was as if they were sharing their last embrace.

They did not want to pull away, but the screams from their friends forced them to.

"I love you," Fluttershy said abruptly.

Discord caressed her cheek. "And I love you."

They were leaning in to kiss again when a singed changeling fell next to them.

"You should probably..." Fluttershy started to say.

"Yeah."

Discord flapped his wings and rose into the sky.

"Hey, Chrissie!" he called. "Your mother eats stink bugs!"

The queen growled and chased after him.

The others were fighting off the changelings, but they were outnumbered. Rainbow Dash was prepping for a sonic rainboom when something tapped her leg.

"Mom!" Prism cried.

Rainbow huffed. "No way am I falling for that again!"

"What are you talking about?"

The filly yelped as the mare lifted her by the tail. "Time to teach you a lesson!"

She bolted into the sky. The filly in her grasp shrieked in terror.

"Mom, what are you doing?! Are you nuts?!"

"Says the one who thinks she can pull a fast one on Rainbow Dash! So long, sucker!"

"Mom, don't!"

Rainbow released the filly. She screamed as she plummeted to the ground. She flapped her wings, but they were not strong enough to lift her body. As soon as Rainbow saw this, her eyes widened.

"Prism?"

"HELP!"

Prism thought she was a goner. She closed her eyes and prepared for impact, but the ground never came. When she opened her eyes, she was on her mother's back.

"What gives, Mom?!" she exclaimed. "You trying to kill me?! You know I can't fly yet!"

Instead of answering, Rainbow set her on a balcony and hollered, "What the hay are you doing here?! I told you to stay inside!"

"I wanted to help!" the filly insisted.

"You could get killed out here!"

Prism folded her forelegs. "Yeah, you made your point when you DROPPED ME FROM THE SKY!"

"I thought you were a changeling! Where's your father? Where are the twins? Why aren't they keeping you out of trouble?"

"Rainbow!" Applejack shouted as she threw a changeling disguised as Cinnamon Roll off her back. "Could ya save the lecturin' for later

and give us a hoof here?!"

The pegasus darted her eyes at her daughter. "Don't leave this spot!"

"But this isn't even our house!" Prism protested.

Her mother ignored her and returned to the fight. A second later, Dinky walked up beside the filly.

"What are you doing on our balcony?" The unicorn turned to the battle. "And what's going on?" She gasped. "Have our clones from the moon finally attacked?!"

Prism stared at the unicorn strangely and shook her head.

Down below, Twilight was kicking wildly at the Flash duplicates.

"I miss my horn," she grumbled.

Then she had an idea and spread out her wings. She flapped them so strongly that she blew the changelings off balance. Twilight smiled smugly.

"Oh yeah," she said, admiring her wings. "I love these things."

"There's too many of 'em!" Applejack yelled as she fended off duplicates of Cinnamon Stick.

"We need help!" Rarity cried, blasting copies of Gemstone.

Behind the hay cart, Screwball was trying to convince her mother to let her help the others.

"Your father told us to stay put!" Fluttershy exclaimed.

"But Mom, I can fight them!"

"No! I will not let you get hurt!"

Screwball was about to protest further when she heard a familiar cry. She peered over the cart and saw a gray unicorn with mismatched eyes charging through the crowd, a light blue pegasus

filly with multi-colored hair riding on her back. They both wore kitchen strainers as helmets and the pegasus waved a wooden spoon. Screwball could not believe her eyes.

"Dinky? Prism?"

It did not take long for Rainbow Dash to notice the pair.

"Prism Soarin Dash!" she bellowed. "You are in big..."

She was cut off as a copy of Soarin pounced on her. Still charging, Dinky ignited her horn and blasted any changeling that got in their way. Some attacked from the side, only to be kicked in the face by Prism.

"Take that, punk!" the filly cried. "Taste..." she paused to punch another changeling, "the prism!"

At that moment, Thunder and Lightning Dash had flown in on the scene. They had been searching for their little sister for what felt like hours. Their jaws dropped when they saw her riding Dinky, battling changelings. Their mother had an equal expression on her face. Applejack smirked at her.

"You've got one tough little gal there, Rainbow."

"But we're still outnumbered!" Twilight declared.

Pinkie leapt into the air. "I've got it!"

She put her hoof to her mouth and whistled. Before you could blink, the Tri-Pies obediently answered their mother's call.

"Get the party cannons, girls!" Pinkie commanded. "And tell Daddy to bring the bunny!"

"Are we gonna throw a party?!" Blueberry asked excitedly.

"Oh yes, girls! Mama assures you it'll be a blast!"

"Yay!" the three cheered simultaneously.

As quickly as they had arrived, they left and returned with three miniature cannons matching the color of their fur and one larger blue cannon for their mother.

"Daddy will be here in a minute," Raspberry explained.

Pinkie's lips broke into a devious smile. "Excellent."

"Will this party have games, Mommy?" Cherry inquired.

"Yes! It's called 'Ponies vs. Clones!' The rules are...blast as many clones as you can! The one who gets the most gets a cupcake! No! Make that ten cupcakes! Oh, and..." She stuck a black moustache on her lip. "You must wear your moustache at all times!"

The triplets quickly obeyed, putting their moustaches on at the same time.

"Good! Now..."

She turned her cannon, surprising a changeling impersonating her.

"Say hello to my little friend!"

The Tri-Pies cheered as they fired confetti at the changelings, each hoping to earn some cupcakes. High above, Lightning slapped Thunder on the back, knocking him out of his shock.

"No way are we getting upstaged by our flightless baby sister and a bunch of confetti weapons!"

"Yeah!" her brother agreed. "Let's give them some Thunder..."

"And Lightning!"

They hoof bumped each other and then flew off to grab a cloud. After merging their two clouds together, they kicked back their legs, turning the large cloud black and causing it to rumble. Then a bolt of lightning struck one of the changelings, singeing its rear.

The twins laughed and continued kicking the cloud, striking all the enemies in range. Meanwhile, Pinkie was rapidly firing her cannon

when Red Shoes tapped her on the shoulder.

"Well, it took you long enough!" she exclaimed. "Wait. It's really you, right?"

The stallion tilted his head and touched his face. "Yeah. I'm pretty sure I'm me." He took off his magician's hat and held it out to her. "I got the bunny."

"Excellent!" She pointed to the Ponyville fountain. "Now get up there and show 'em your stuff, baby!"

Red Shoes grinned as he jumped up onto the rim of the fountain.

"Changelings and gentlemares!" he announced.

Several of the changelings paused for a while and stared at the red-headed stallion in confusion.

"Behold!" He showed the inside of the hat to his audience. "An ordinary hat! Completely empty!" He pulled back the sleeves of his magician's jacket. "Nothing up my sleeve!" He reached into the hat. "Presto!"

Red Shoes pulled out a set of pink ears that were much too large to fit in the hat. He continued pulling and the changelings cowered in fear. Before them stood a six-foot tall rabbit with sharp fangs, long claws and a foaming mouth.

"Okay, Harvey," Red Shoes said, gesturing to the changelings. "They're all yours."

The enormous rabbit roared and some of the changelings screamed and fled. Others stood their ground, only to be thwacked by Harvey's incredibly large paw. The mares and fillies looked up at the monster in awe.

"Where did you...?" Applejack started to ask.

"A little magic trick gone wrong," Red Shoes explained. "Been saving him for emergencies like this."

Pinkie sighed. "Isn't he just the greatest?"

While her army was being vanquished by a giant rabbit, Chrysalis scanned the town for her prey.

"Come on out, you coward!" she bellowed.

"Honestly, Chrissie!" called Discord's voice. "You used to love hide-and-seek! What happened to you?"

She growled. " *You* happened to me!"

Her ears perked up as she heard a twig snap behind her. She turned around just as Discord landed on her back. The two began wrestling each other, rolling in the dirt, taking turns pinning the other down.

"What did you mean by that?" Discord demanded.

The queen shouted and switched places with him so she was on top. "I was perfectly fine until *you* came into my life!"

"Oh, how tragic!" He rolled her onto her back. "I'll send you an apology card!"

He cried out as she kicked him in the stomach, forcing him off of her. The queen stood and looked grudgingly down at him.

"You've heard that changelings don't have hearts. Didn't you ever wonder why that was?"

Discord was caught by surprise at this question. He scratched his head, trying to think of a witty comeback.

"Evolution?"

She groaned. "Even after all these years, you're still ignorant! Changelings weren't always heartless. I still had my heart when we met. You do remember those days, don't you?"

He scowled. "You mean when you tricked me, made me your pawn in your scheme to conquer Equestria?!"

"Oh, Equestria was never part of the plan. When you took over, I simply saw an opportunity and took advantage of it."

"But...you said..."

"I lied! The real reason I sent you to Equestria was so you could feel the pain I had felt! I knew those ponies would never accept you, just as you never accepted me!"

"What are you talking about?!" Discord asked again. "You're not making sense!" He paused. "Wow. Never knew how annoying that could be."

"Now," the queen said ominously, "I can have my revenge!"

"For *what* ?!"

"For rejecting me!"

Discord could not remember a time where he had been more shocked. He blinked multiple times before he was able to speak.

"Wait. You...me...you had a...crush...on me?" He paused. "I don't know whether I should be flattered or disgusted."

Chrysalis cried out angrily and charged up her horn. Discord quickly scattered out of the way and hid behind a rock.

"You rejected me!" she shouted again.

"In my defense," Discord called desperately, "I had no way knowing!"

He rushed to a garbage can as Chrysalis shattered the rock into millions of pieces.

"When I realized you had no love in your heart for anything," she growled, "I sent you to Equestria so you would know what rejection felt like!"

Discord moved behind a crate as the queen destroyed his hiding place.

"I thought you and I were alike," she continued. "Two outcasts in a world of rejection. I thought you would understand."

She blasted the crate, revealing the draconequus huddled in a ball. He hurried inside a mailbox.

"But I couldn't stop thinking about you," Chrysalis admitted, her voice cracking. "I had to take the pain away. So, using a spell I had discovered in a book of dark magic, I removed my heart from my chest!"

Discord gagged. "That's a bit dramatic, don't you think?"

He teleported out of the mailbox when he heard her horn charge up. He watched as she made it explode into paper. Discord searched frantically for another place to hide.

"The spell did more than I thought," Chrysalis said, smirking at how helpless he looked. "When I became Queen and started having children, I discovered that my new race of changelings lacked of hearts as well! Unfortunately, it meant we had to fill that empty space in our chests with love from others. Oh, but it was all worth it! From feeding off the love of others, we gain power! And power is stronger than any emotion you can ever inflict upon me! And with you out of the way, Equestria will be ours!"

"Now, now, Chrissie!" Discord said, holding up his hands as he backed away. "Let's not get hasty! It wouldn't have worked out. I mean didn't you eat your last three husbands?"

Chrysalis growled and was about to cast another spell when something hit her on the back of the head. She looked down and saw it was an apple.

"Who threw that?!" she demanded, spinning around.

Lined up behind a wooden table was a purple dragon, two adolescent fillies, a colt with a bandaged head an a muscular red stallion. They were all wearing pots on their heads and were each holding an apple, except for the younger filly.

"Good shot, little cuz!" Apple Blossom exclaimed.

Cinnamon Roll cracked her hooves. "It's all in the ankle!"

"Now let's *really* teach her a lesson! The Apple Family way! Right, Pa?"

"Eeyup," Big Macintosh nodded.

"Ready?" Cinnamon Stick exclaimed. "Aim!"

The Apples raised their ammo.

"Fire!"

They threw the apples at the queen, who was too stunned to dodge them. Cinnamon Roll tossed some toward Spike. He set them on fire and batted them with his tail. Chrysalis shrieked as they burned her.

"Why, you meddling..."

She prepared her horn, ready to vaporize the lot when she heard Discord fall to the ground. She turned back to him and saw that he was running away.

"I'll deal with you later!" she shouted at the family.

Discord looked up to see the queen flying after him. He flapped his wings, hoping he would pick up speed, but she landed on him with a thud.

"Now, I can..."

She trailed off as she saw the battle's progress. Most of her army had fallen at the hand of...a giant rabbit.

"No!" she cried. "We will not lose! Especially not to a bunny!"

She fired at the rabbit's back. It roared as the magic enveloped him. There was a flash of light and in the giant's place was a tiny, fluffy, white bunny. It hopped away in fear.

"Harvey!" Red Shoes exclaimed.

"Oh my gosh!" Screwball uttered. "She's gained more power than I

thought!"

Flutershy squeaked when she saw her husband lying beneath the queen's hooves.

"No more interruptions!" Chrysalis declared, her horn glowing green. "Say your prayers, Dissy dear!"

Discord tried to struggle out of her grasp, but he was too weak.

"Discord!" Fluttershy cried.

She flew out of her hiding place. Screwball reached for her tail, but missed.

"Mom, don't!"

A beam shot from the queen's horn and a painful scream was heard. Every pony, even the changelings, went silent and turned to the sound. Screwball's eyes were wild, Discord's mouth fell open, the others stared at the horrific scene.

Even Chrysalis watched in shock as the yellow pegasus fell limply to the ground.

Um...

hides

The Power of Love

This was going to be longer, but I didn't want to leave you hanging for too long.

"No!"

Discord shoved Chrysalis off him and was instantly at Fluttershy's side. He took her limp body in his arms.

She felt so lifeless.

"No, no, no, no, no!" he uttered, desperately stroking her mane. "Fluttershy, speak to me! Please!"

He held his paw over her chest and closed his eyes. No matter how hard he concentrated, nothing happened.

"Come on!" he grunted. "Work, you stupid magic! Save her! Come on!"

After a while, he sighed in defeat. It was no use. He did not have enough power to heal her. His ears perked up when he heard a soft moan.

"Discord?"

He glanced down at her. Her eyes were open, but weary. Discord smiled and gently lifted her head.

"Yes, Fluttershy! I'm here!"

"I feel so..." she said in a dry voice, "so..."

His happiness faded. "No, Fluttershy! Please! Don't leave me! We'll find some pony to heal you! You'll make it! I can keep trying!"

He moved his paw to her chest, but she stopped him with her hoof.

"No," she whispered.

Tears formed in the draconequus' eyes. "Don't die, Fluttershy! I love you! I need you! We're supposed to be together forever! I...I can't live without you!"

She smiled up at him. "You'll have to." Discord held her tighter as she coughed. "Take care of the children. They...need you."

He took her hoof in his paw. "Don't talk like that! You'll live, Fluttershy! You *must* live! My life has no purpose without you! I...I forgot that for a moment. But never again, Fluttershy! I promise you! I will never doubt you again! Just please! Live!"

He sniffed. "Forgive me."

Fluttershy looked at him solemnly and slowly reached her hoof to his face. "I forgive you." She winced in pain. "Just know that...you are the only stallion I've ever loved."

Discord could no longer hold back the tears as he ran his fingers through her mane. "I'm no stallion."

She struggled as she rose and kissed him softly on the lips.

"You are...to me."

He felt her hoof slipping from his face and Discord watched as Fluttershy closed her eyes and collapsed in his arms. For the second time that day, his heart shattered into millions of pieces.

"No," he uttered. "No! NO!"

Discord shook her, but she did not respond. Finally, he buried his face in her fur and sobbed.

His wife, his sweet, loving wife, the thing he adored more than chaos, was gone.

The others looked at the heartbreaking scene. Applejack removed her hat as Spike put his arm around her. Pinkie cried into Red Shoes' shoulder while the triplets embraced each other. Rainbow

Dash held Prism as she sobbed while Rarity and Twilight hugged sadly. The others shared embraces and wiped away their tears. Screwball was the saddest of the bunch as she threw her hooves around Dinky's neck.

"Now you know."

Every pony looked up as Chrysalis spoke.

"Now you know how it feels...to have your heart ripped out of your chest!"

Discord lifted his head and turned it towards the Changeling Queen. His tear-stained eyes were burning with hatred and fury.

"You," he whispered.

He put down Fluttershy's body and rose to his full height. He then erupted into flames.

"YOU! YOU KILLED HER! YOU KILLED THE ONLY MARE I EVER LOVED!"

Chrysalis shrugged. "Too bad."

He growled as the flames grew stronger. "Stealing my power is one thing, but THIS!" He held out his claw and created a ball of fire. "YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS, YOU MONSTER!"

Discord let out a cry as he threw the fireball at her. Chrysalis dodged out of the way, letting it hit a group of changelings. The fire in Discord's eyes frightened the queen, though she did not show it. She bolted into the air and he followed her.

Screwball rushed to her mother's side. She gazed at her still body and flung herself across her chest.

"Mom," she sobbed.

She felt a hoof on her shoulder. Screwball looked up to meet Twilight's eyes.

"Can't you do anything?" the filly begged.

The alicorn shook her head sadly. "No magic can bring back the dead, sweetie."

Meanwhile, high above them, Discord continued to fire at Chrysalis, only to narrowly miss every time. His blood boiled with vengeance. Never in his life had he been so infuriated, nor had he had such a desire to kill someone!

His anger made the sky turn red.

"YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR THIS TIME, CHRYSALIS!" Discord shouted, throwing another fireball at her. "YOU WANT THE LORD OF CHAOS?! I'LL GIVE YOU THE LORD OF CHAOS!"

He was about to fire another one when Chrysalis smirked.

"It doesn't have to be this way, you know?"

His fire slowly extinguished as the queen changed form. Floating before him was a beautiful yellow pegasus with pink waves cascading down her shoulders. Her eyelashes fluttered over her brilliant teal eyes. She smiled sweetly at him.

"Fluttershy?"

The fake Fluttershy nodded as she laid her hooves on his shoulders.

"It will be like she never left," she said in Fluttershy's sweet, angelic voice. Her hooves moved around his neck. "We could be happy, you and I. It will be the way you've always wanted: you and Fluttershy, together forever..." she whispered in his ear, "for all eternity."

Discord was fixated on those brilliant teal eyes he thought he would never see again. As she leaned forward, her eyes flashed green. That broke him out of his trance. He angrily pushed the poser away.

"No!" he exclaimed. "You're not my Fluttershy. You may look and sound like her, but you'll never be her!"

The imposter glared at him as she changed back to Chrysalis.

"Why her?! What could you possibly have seen in that...that...that wimpy pegasus?!"

Discord scowled as his fists ignited. "DON'T...EVER...CALL HER THAT!"

Screwball's head shot up as she heard a groan and saw her mother's head move to the side.

"She's alive!" Screwball exclaimed.

The draconequus was about to strike when he heard this. He turned and looked down at the ground.

"She's alive?"

"So it would appear."

Chrysalis took advantage of his distraction and shot Discord with a powerful beam. The blast made him lose consciousness, causing him to fall. Every pony gasped in fright. Pinkie and the Tri-Pies rushed into their house and came back with a mattress.

"To the left!" Pinkie commanded.

"My left or yours?" Blueberry asked.

"Right!"

"So we go right?" Cherry inquired.

"No, left!"

"Which way is left?!" Raspberry exclaimed.

Lightning Dash smacked herself in the forehead. "Oh, give us that!"

She and Thunder swooped down and grabbed the mattress. They positioned themselves under the falling draconequus and flew straight up. Every pony sighed in relief as he landed on the feathered bed.

The twins lowered him to the ground. Screwball raced to his side

and shook him while Twilight checked his pulse.

"He's still alive," she confirmed.

"But not for long," Chrysalis said, landing in front of them with a thud. "If at first you don't succeed..."

Screwball stood on her hind legs and gripped her hooves into fists. This mare had kept Mothball away from her, kidnapped her brother, stolen her power and now practically murdered her parents!

She had had it!

Chrysalis grew quiet as pink clouds covered the sky and thunder sounded. She looked at the young mare. Lightning struck behind her, her spiral purple eyes glowing between flashes.

"Uh oh," Lightning Dash uttered, pulling her siblings behind a barrel.

The other teenagers and foals ducked for cover, knowing what was to come.

"You," Screwball breathed, "have messed...WITH THE WRONG MARE!"

A series of pies appeared beside her and rocketed towards the queen. She dodged them as best she could, but one hit her square in the face.

"Cherry?!" she cried. "I HATE CHERRY!"

"Hey!" Cherry Pie exclaimed.

As Chrysalis aimed her horn at Screwball, Twilight and her friends quickly moved the unconscious Discord and Fluttershy out of the way. The Changeling Queen shot a beam at her, but Screwball avoided it with a tilt of her head.

"Don't waste your breath, brat!" Chrysalis snapped. "I have your power *and* your father's! You cannot defeat me!"

"You may have the Power of Chaos," Screwball said, "but I've been

using it *much* longer!"

A shadow cast over the queen. She looked up and saw a piano falling towards her. She gasped and blast it with her horn, turning it to bubbles.

She smirked. "Silly, but effective. I could get used to this."

"Well, you're not going to get a lot of time!" Screwball declared. "By the way, meat sauce or alfredo?"

Chrysalis blinked. "What?"

She yelped as acres of spaghetti dropped on her head, followed by a flood of meatballs. She growled at the filly.

"So it's a duel you want, eh? Well, a duel you shall have!"

She used her magic to get rid of the pasta and scraped her hoof in the ground. Screwball got down on all fours and mimicked the queen's movement. The changelings stood loyally behind their ruler, but she motioned for them to back away. The ponies watched with worry and anticipation.

"Draw!"

Chrysalis fired her horn and a flock of buzzards appeared. They charged towards Screwball, but she smirked and turned them into winged oranges. Then she summoned a giant mallet, but Chrysalis saw it in time to move out of the way. Screwball continued to try to wack her with the hammer, but the queen turned it into rubber.

"Is that all you got?" the changeling taunted. "A bunch of childish tricks?"

"Okay," Screwball said with a shrug. "You asked for it!"

The water in the Ponyville fountain suddenly turned brown and burst upward. The water-spout spun in a spiral, eventually forming a hurricane. The cyclone blew towards Chrysalis. She jumped in the air to escape it, but it caught her by the tail and whirred her around. When it dropped her, the hurricane fell apart and soaked the queen

in the brown liquid.

"Had enough, Queenie?" Screwball ridiculed.

Chrysalis groaned and slowly returned to her hooves. "How did you get your power back so quickly?! It should have at least taken a week to..."

"I'm stronger than you took me for!"

Meanwhile, on the sidelines, Rarity had her head on Fluttershy's chest, checking her heartbeat.

"Fluttershy's fading fast!" she said with terror.

"Thunder, Lightning!" Rainbow Dash commanded, putting her hooves under Fluttershy's forelegs. "Help me get Fluttershy inside!"

"But we want to watch the fight!" Lightning complained.

"Now!"

The twins each took one of Fluttershy's hind legs and helped their mother carry her into Derpy's house. Rarity followed behind, levitating a first aid kit she had summoned from home. Screwball saw her mother being carried inside and was not paying attention when a giant red boxing glove punched her in the face.

She was knocked backward into a pile of hay. The others rushed to help, but Chrysalis blocked them out with a ring of green fire.

"This is between me and the halfling!" she bellowed. "There will be no interference!"

She advanced toward Screwball as she sat up to rub her head.

"Give up, girl! You may have had time to recover, but you're still weak!"

The young mare glared up at her. "I'm strong enough to defeat you!"

The queen smirked. "You have spunk, child. No one said we had to

fight. Join me, Screwball! Together, we could rule Equestria! I will gain power, you will gain your own chaotic playground! You can even have my son and inherit my throne!"

She knelt down to meet her eye level. "No longer will you be an outcast. No longer will you be mocked. You will be respected, worshipped! You can take revenge on those who have shunned you! And no pony, no *one* , will ever spoil your fun again!"

Screwball's eyes widened at the queen's words. Then they narrowed.

"What you're offering me," she said, "I've already gotten. And frankly," she rose to her hooves, "I don't want that kind of life!"

Chrysalis did not show a glimmer of surprise. "Then you must die."

As she powered her horn, something appeared between the two.

"Screwy! Finally!"

"Mothball?" Screwball gasped.

Chrysalis had not seen her son and cast her spell without hesitation. Screwball hastily pushed Mothball out of the way, landing on top of him. His eyes were wide with shock.

"Am I late?"

Screwball panted. "Where have you...?"

She trailed off as she saw what he held in his hooves. Zany opened his mouth in a smile at the sight of his sister. Screwball looked at her brother and then at Mothball, who was wearing a nervous grin.

"Surprise?"

Chrysalis finally noticed Mothball and dropped her jaw.

"How...how did you get past the guards? And how did you get the boy?!"

The prince recalled how he and Zany were cornered back at the hive. He was sure they were goners, until Zany had a magical surge and teleported them out of there. Unfortunately, they reappeared in the frozen tundra and since changelings were cold-blooded, it was not a pleasant experience for him. It took several teleportation spells from Zany before they finally arrived at the battle.

"Well, doesn't matter!" Chrysalis shouted. "You have disobeyed me for the last time!"

Screwball took Zany and teleported him to the other side of the flames onto Twilight's back. Then she stood firmly in front of Mothball. The queen paused at this action and felt the love pass between the two. She could sense its power and that instead of it transferring to Mothball, it was bouncing back to the filly and growing stronger each second.

This frightened the queen, but she covered her fear with a smirk.

"Oh, my son," she said, shaking her head. "Have I taught you nothing? Love is weakness! Besides, you have no heart to feel it!"

Mothball stomped his hoof. "You're wrong!"

Chrysalis jumped at his assertive tone. "What?"

"You're wrong! I *do* have a heart! I've felt it! You've known all along, haven't you?"

"Mothball..."

"Haven't you?!"

His mother stared at him for a moment and then grunted. "Alright. I suppose since I'm going to destroy you anyway, you might as well know."

The couple tightened their grip on each other as the queen circled them.

"You are right," she began. "You are more different from your siblings than you appear. You see, my dear, making a common

changeling is simple. Making a royal changeling is a...two-creature job. Unlike your half-siblings, you have a father."

Mothball stiffened. "W-what?"

"It was a one-night stand with some random fool who thought I was his wife."

Screwball gagged. "That's just sick, lady."

"I was shocked to discover a prince had come out of it. At first, I was thrilled at the idea of having an heir, until I realized just how much of a pony you really were. Seems your father, along with giving you life, gave you a heart.

"So I tricked you into believing you didn't have one. I intended to shape you into a cold, cruel changeling so you would become the evil tyrant you were born to be! I almost succeeded too, until this meddling halfling captured your interest!"

"So it's true then!" Mothball exclaimed. "You've lied to me all these years!"

"Oh, Mothball, Mothball, Mothball. I lie to *everyone* ! But don't worry, my dear. I will put you out of your misery."

She fired her horn at him.

"No!" Screwball cried.

As she moved in front of him, a golden bubble formed around the pair that caused the green beam to bounce off.

"What?" Chrysalis uttered.

The two looked around the magic they were encased in. It reminded Mothball of something and Screwball was thinking back to her mother's story.

"What is this?" the prince wondered.

"I don't know," Screwball said. "I...I was just thinking about saving

you and..."

Mothball then recalled the image of the two ponies in Zecora's cauldron and the zebra's words:

That is what happens when two become one, when they possess a magic more powerful than the sun. What you think as a weakness is not so. Strength is what comes with the glow.

"Love is strength."

"What?" Screwball said.

Their forcefield did not last long and Chrysalis took her chance. Screwball quickly used her magic to seal her and Mothball in a steel box, hoping to buy them time.

"Zecora!" he exclaimed. "When she was talking about balancing powers and strength, she was trying to tell us that our love is creating some sort of magic that could possibly defeat my mother!"

"But that makes no sense!" Screwball insisted. "She gains power *from* love! How can it be used to defeat her?"

Then she remembered who had defeated Chrysalis in the first place: Cadence and Shining Armor. Those two were in love. Cadence was the Princess of Love. Maybe...

Screwball gapsed suddenly. "Chocolate milk!"

Mothball blinked. "Screwy, this is hardly the time for a snack!"

"No! Hear me out! You've said so yourself that chocolate milk is like love, right?"

"I said it *tasted* like love, but..."

"Well, chocolate milk is the best thing ever and it makes you feel great, but if you drink too much of it, you get a belly ache. If chocolate milk is anything like love..."

"...excess of it can make you sick!" The prince gasped and gripped

her shoulders. "Screwy, you're a genius!"

She batted her eyes and flipped her hair. "Yeah, I know."

Their moment was interrupted when Chrysalis' horn burned a hole in the steel wall. The queen was growling in frustration.

"Enough is enough!"

The couple glanced at each other and stepped out of the box defiantly.

"We agree, Mother!" Mothball exclaimed. "This has to end now!"

They stood on their hind legs and squeezed each other's hoof. Mothball whispered to her.

"How are we going to do this?"

Screwball spun him around to face her.

"Kiss me."

"WHAT?!"

Queen Chrysalis panicked for a moment but quickly reverted her expression to one of anger.

"Quit stalling and meet your fate!"

"Kiss me," Screwball repeated, pulling her love closer.

Mothball flinched away. "I...I can't."

"You have to."

"I don't want to hurt you!"

He tried to pry out of her grasp, but she held him firmly. She looked at him sincerely with those purple swirls that enchanted him so.

"You won't," she whispered.

She did not savor the moment. There was no time for that. Instead, she was straightforward. Their lips met before he could protest.

He expected her to feel pain. He expected her to slip away. He expected her power to transfer to him permanently.

Instead, he felt warmth, not just from her, but deep within himself.

He found himself liking the kiss. Her soft lips tasted of chocolate. Her gentle hoof caressed his face. He at last closed his eyes and flung his forelegs around her in surrender.

Their manes blew in the wind. They rose into the air as golden mist swirled around them. Chrysalis looked up in terror.

"No," she said. "NO!"

On the other side of the flames, Discord was recovering from his concussion. He rubbed his head as his vision came into focus. He squinted above the green fire and made out the figures of two ponies within a ball of golden light. His eyes popped open once he realized who the ponies were.

"He's kissing my daughter."

He scowled.

"HE'S KISSING MY DAUGHTER!"

The others nodded dumbly, watching with their mouths agape.

"WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE IDIOTS!" Discord bellowed. "DO SOMETHING! GET THAT CREEP AWAY FROM MY..."

He trailed off when Zany jumped onto his stomach, gurgling happily.

"Dada!"

"Zany?" Discord said, taking the infant in his hands. "Is it really you?"

A tiny pink cloud appeared above the boy and dripped chocolate milk. The draconequus smiled.

"It's you, alright! But...how did...?"

The baby pointed up at the floating couple.

The light around them grew brighter as they rose higher. Then the two opened their glowing white eyes. The bubble burst and expanded towards Chrysalis. The queen cried out as the magic pushed her back. The other changelings attempted to flee, but the force field was too fast for them.

The army screamed as it was sent hurdling to the Changeling Forest, not to be seen again for a long, long time.

Cliché, I know, but there's one more chapter to go!

Ever After

Well, here's the last chapter. It's been fun, but all good things must come to an end.

BTW, Bronyland is hosting the first annual Pony Awards! You could vote for your favorite fanfic writer! *cough* me *cough*

When the young couple floated back to the ground, their lips were still locked. The world around them had returned to normal and not a changeling, except Mothball, was in sight. The fillies and colts hopped out of their hiding places and cheered. Discord was struck in awe, but still angry.

"At some point they should come up for air!" he exclaimed furiously.

Applejack rolled her eyes. "Hon, the boy just saved our lives! Not to mention he brought Zany back."

When the pair finally pulled away, Mothball was smiling like an idiot.

"Wow!"

His eyes spun in circles and animated hearts popped up behind his head. This made Screwball giggle. Her friends rushed to her side and embraced her.

"That was amazing!" Apple Blossom shouted.

"Heroic!" Cinnamon Stick added.

"Cool!" the Tri-Pies piped.

"Romantic!" Cinnamon Roll sighed.

"Awesome!" Prism said, but then she stuck out her tongue. "Even if it did involve kissing."

"So you guys aren't mad at me?" Screwball asked hopefully.

"Of course not!" Dinky insisted. "We forgive you!"

"Yeah," Cinnamon Stick said, putting his hoof to his bandaged head. "It wasn't even that bad."

Meanwhile, Mothball was twirling in circles, lost in the memory of the bliss he had just experienced.

"Uh oh," Apple Blossom chuckled. "Screwy, I think your kiss did more than save the world. You've made the poor boy all loopy!"

The group laughed. Screwball broke their hug and walked over to her coltfriend. She put her hooves on his shoulders to stop him from falling over. Mothball then returned to his senses, only to get lost in her hypnotic swirls.

"I'm proud of you, Screwy."

They turned toward Twilight, who had her horn back.

"You lost yourself in your emotions, but in the end, you did not lose sight of what was truly important: the love for your family, the love for you friends, and," the alicorn smirked, "the love for your colt."

Mothball blushed nervously. "Princess...I know I've done some bad things in the past, but I swear I'll be careful around ponies! I can become a vegetarian and live on chocolate!"

Twilight laughed. "You are pardoned, Mothball."

The alicorn's mirth diminished when Discord stepped in front of her. Mothball shrunk under the draconequus' strict glare. His arms were folded and his face wore a frown. The changeling clung to Screwball for leverage. She gave him a reassuring squeeze.

Discord glanced between the two. Neither said anything for a long while. Then he sighed and extended his paw towards the changeling.

Mothball looked at it unsurely. He glanced at Screwball, who was

grinning excitedly. She let go of him and nudged him toward Discord's paw. The prince gazed up at the draconequus. His eyebrow was raised, as if to say: *Do you want my daughter or not?*

The changeling slowly raised his hoof and placed it in his paw. As soon as they made contact, Mothball felt a bolt of electricity and shook uncontrollably. He wrenched his hoof away.

Discord started laughing and revealed the joybuzzer in his paw. He clutched his stomach as he collapsed to the ground. The Pie family was laughing as well, as was Screwball. The others either giggled or just grinned in amusement.

Mothball looked at his marefriend in confusion. "What are you laughing at? Your dad just electrocuted me!"

Screwball chuckled as she patted him on the back. "Baby, that's his way of showing that he likes you!"

The changeling looked at the others. Cinnamon Stick gave him a shrug.

"It's true."

Mothball then found himself snickering. Everyone went silent however when Rainbow Dash emerged from Derpy's house. Her face was solemn. She saw that the world was normal again and that Screwball was holding hooves with a changeling, but all that mattered was the news she was about to deliver.

"Rainbow, what's wrong?" Applejack inquired.

The pegasus hung her head. "It's Fluttershy."

Discord flung the door to Derpy's room open. The Dash twins backed into the corners, allowing him to see the scene more clearly. Derpy was standing off to the side, sniffing as she held a plate of muffins. Rarity was kneeling by the bed, removing a stethoscope from her head. Fluttershy lay on the cot, completely still. The unicorn looked sadly up at Discord and shook her head.

He walked slowly toward his wife, his eyes locked entirely on her frozen face. He gently put his fingers to her neck. No pulse. He laid his paw on her chest. No heartbeat. No breath.

The others crowded in the doorway, gasping at the sight. Screwball pushed forward, her brother in her hooves. She paused in the middle of the room. She looked to Rarity.

"Is she...?"

Rarity hung her head and nodded.

"No," Discord uttered.

He lifted Fluttershy's lifeless body and held her close. Her once soft yellow fur was now pale and stiff. He sobbed into her pink mane. Its rosy scent had gone stale and her strands of silk had gone brittle.

He pulled away slightly to look at her face. Never again would he see her sweet smile, nor her sparkling teal eyes. Never would he hear her enchanting voice or her delicate laughter.

She was gone. For real, this time.

Screwball squeezed Zany as tears fell from her eyes. Mothball pulled her in for an embrace and allowed her to cry on his shoulder. He stroked her mane sympathetically.

Fluttershy's friends all shed tears, but they knew neither of them were as heartbroken as Discord.

"I'm sorry, Fluttershy," he whispered, running his hands through her fur and mane. "I'm so sorry! No amount of chaos can replace my love for you. Please, don't leave me now. I love you. Fluttershy, I love you so much."

He pressed his face to hers. "Come back to me."

As he said that, a golden tear fell from his eye and landed on Fluttershy's forehead. Slowly, her colors returned and her heart started up again.

Her eyes fluttered open and she looked up at her husband's teary face.

"Discord?" she uttered.

Discord gasped and looked at her. "Fluttershy?"

The others lifted their heads in disbelief, their mouths spreading into smiles.

"Did...did we win?" Fluttershy asked.

The draconequus nodded, his tears now falling with joy.

"Oh, Fluttershy!"

He embraced his wife, surprising her, but she returned his hug.

"How...?" Applejack breathed. "How is this possible?!"

"It...it isn't!" Twilight exclaimed happily. "There's no way she... Oh, but who cares?!"

Screwball left Mothball and ran to her parents.

"Mom!"

The couple pulled away and opened their arms for their daughter. Fluttershy weeped at the sight of Zany.

"Oh, my baby!" she cried. "I thought I had lost you!"

"We thought we had lost *you* !" Screwball sniffed.

"Our family," Discord sighed, "together at last!"

"Promise me we'll never split up again?"

The draconequus shook his head with a laugh. "Never."

Mothball smiled as the family embraced each other. He was happy that they were whole again, but it also made him sad. The changelings were the only family he had ever known. Now that he

had left them, he had no one. He did not even have a place to live.

Then Fluttershy noticed Mothball. She was surprised to see him here, but given the fact that Discord had not vaporized him, she figured things were sorted out between them now. She reached out her hoof toward him. Mothball beamed as he took it and she pulled him in.

Pinkie Pie blew her nose in a handkerchief.

"It's so beautiful!" she cried.

Then she smiled suddenly. "Hey! You know what this calls for?"

Everyone laughed.

"Yes, Pinkie," Twilight said. "We definitely do."

The park was covered with streamers, balloons and ponies dancing to Vinyl Scratch's music. Ponies were crowding Screwball and Mothball, thanking them for saving Ponyville. Their attention was diverted when the chariots of the royal sisters landed on the grass. Every pony bowed as the two princesses walked toward Twilight.

"Did we miss anything?" Luna inquired.

The purple alicorn chuckled. "Quite a bit."

On the other side of the park, the colts and fillies were playing Pin the Tail on the Pony. Prism took off her blindfold and gasped.

"I won!"

The Tri-Pies cheered and pinned a blue ribbon in her mane. They squealed when the music changed.

"Ooh!" Blueberry squeaked. "I love this song!"

"Me too!" said Raspberry.

"Dance off!" Cherry declared.

Prism was about to follow the triplets to the dance floor when she spotted Gemstone sitting by herself with her head down. The pegasus filly walked up to the unicorn.

"Hey, Gem."

Gemstone looked up, surprised that some pony was talking to her. Prism held out her hoof with a smile.

"You wanna come dance with us?"

The unicorn's face lit up. "Really? I'd love to!"

Rarity grinned as she watched her daughter join the other fillies. Her smile faded as she caught sight of the many couples dancing together. The fact that her special some pony was not with her made her sigh sadly.

"Rarity!"

Her head shot up and turned to the stallion that was racing toward her. She could not believe her eyes.

"Fancy Pants?"

Her husband stopped and caught his breath before answering. "Yes!"

"W-what are you doing in Ponyville?"

He grabbed her hoof and looked her desperately in the eye.

"Rarity, what happened between me and Fleurs-de-lils was nothing! I did not encourage us getting back together! She forced herself upon *me* ! I do not love her, nor do I have any intentions for her! I swear!

"Still, I should have told you about seeing her earlier. Please, please forgive me, Rarity! I love you and only you!"

Rarity's eyes were watery. "You...you came all the way from Canterlot...to get me back?"

He caressed her face with his hoof. "Of course. I wasn't going to lose you, not without a fight."

She could not remember a time when he was any more romantic. She flung her forelegs around his neck.

"I'm the one who should be apologizing," she insisted. "It was me who jumped to conclusions. I should have heard your side of the story first."

Fancy Pants smiled in gratitude. "My dear, why don't we promise to always be open with each other and to never again hold back our feelings?"

Rarity pulled away and nodded. "Agreed. So, now that we're being open with each other..."

She took a deep breath and spoke rapidly.

"I'm tired of living in Canterlot. Oh, the ponies are so rude and vulgar! I think we should move back to Ponyville. I'll be closer to my friends and business is much better here. And I'd prefer it if you stop patting me on the head in public, I feel like a trophy wife! Oh, and you hardly spend any time with little Gemstone! You should take her to school every day from now on. Oh, and darling, that bow tie is so wrinkled! And you really need to find a new dry cleaner..."

Applejack watched the couple from afar and shook her head with a smirk. Spike approached her, rubbing the back of his neck.

"Rarity told me what the changelings said to you," he admitted.

The cowgirl glanced at him and hung her head.

"Do you really think I picked you as a last resort?"

She met his eyes. "No, but...sometimes, I can't help but think...you would've married her had I not spoken up. You hardly noticed me before then, and...well...I'm not..."

He laid his claw on her shoulder. " *You're* my wife, AJ. Sure, I liked Rarity first, but I *love* you."

"So...you don't think Rarity's prettier than me?"

Spike smiled as he lifted her chin. "Rarity's as pretty as a gem, but you, AJ, shine like gold."

Tears fell down her cheeks as Applejack embraced her beloved dragon.

After explaining the day's events to the princesses, Twilight felt a tap on her shoulder. She whirled around to face...

"Flash?"

The golden pegasus was not wearing his armor. It had been a long time since she had seen him like that. He looked down at his hoof as it drew circles in the ground. Twilight was about to ask the princesses to leave but saw they were already gone.

They were silent for a while and did nothing but stare at each other awkwardly.

"Hey," Flash finally said.

"Hey," Twilight repeated.

Another silence.

"Look," the stallion sighed. "I know you hate me, and you probably don't want to speak to me..."

"I'm sorry."

His ears perked up. "What?"

Twilight stepped toward him. "I'm sorry. What happened between us was stupid. I mean what we had was wonderful, but the way it ended was just plain stupid! I didn't even bother trying to patch things up with you. I...I've been an idiot."

Flash Sentry lowered his head. "I'm sorry too. It takes two ponies to end a relationship, after all. And...for what it's worth...I never wanted it to end."

She blushed slightly. "Can...can we start over? And at least be friends again?"

He raised his eyebrow at her. "No."

Her smile faded. "What?"

"I don't want us to be friends."

"Then...why did you come here?"

"To give you this."

He reached into his saddle bag and pulled out a small blue box. Twilight gasped as he opened it to show a sparkling amethyst ring.

"I was planning to give it to you before we broke up," Flash explained. "You don't have to say yes, but I at least want you to have it. See, I saved up a lot of money to get this and I was hoping that someday you might..."

"Yes."

He looked up. "What was that?"

Twilight shouted, "YES!"

She surprised him by fiercely pressing her lips against his. He smiled and wrapped his forelegs around her. Twilight had forgotten how wonderful it felt to kiss him. She silently swore never to doubt him again.

Derpy was dancing solo. She did not mind. She had accepted being single long ago. Her daughter was a little ways off with Cinnamon Stick, but the mare was not lonely. As long as Dinky was happy, she was happy.

"Derpy?"

The pegasus froze in place at the sound of a voice she had not heard in years. She turned slowly, praying she was not dreaming.

There he was. He had not changed: brown coat, brown mane, blue eyes, hour-glass cutie mark. He even wore the green tie she had given him.

And he still made her weak in the knees.

The Doctor turned his head to the gray unicorn with wonky eyes.

"Is that...?"

Derpy nodded dumbly. "Her name is Dinky."

"She's beautiful," he said, facing her again, "like her mother."

The pegasus blushed.

"Is she happy?"

"Yes," Derpy replied, "but she needs her father."

"Derpy," he said seriously, "you understand I'm only here for a moment."

She sighed. "Daleks?"

"Cybers, but that was a good guess." He paused. "I'm sorry I left you so abruptly, Derpy. See, there are other worlds that need me. I came back so I could properly say goodbye."

Derpy shook her head. "I don't like goodbyes, but if you're going to say anything, say it to Dinky. I...I want her to meet her father."

The Doctor looked nervously at the young mare dancing with the brown colt.

"Alright," he said.

He approached the filly. She did not see him at first, but when she did, she stopped. Her mismatched eyes squinted at him.

"Do I know you?"

He smiled. "No, but I'm a friend of your mother's."

Cinnamon Stick rolled his eyes. "Yeah, that's what they all say."

The Doctor laughed. "Smart lad, here. Is he your boyfriend?"

Dinky blushed. "Yeah, you could say that."

"Well, I know this doesn't mean much to you, but I approve."

He turned to leave. Dinky watched him curiously.

"Wait!" she called. "What did you say your name was?"

He looked over his shoulder. "They call me...the Doctor."

Dinky's eyes widened. She continued to watch the stallion as he walked over to her mother and embraced her. Her mother was sobbing and looked as if she did not want to let him go.

"You did a good job taking care of her," he whispered.

Derpy said nothing, only tightened his grip on him.

"I love you," she sniffed.

He pulled away and gazed into her eyes. "I love you too."

Dinky recognized the stallion. She had seen him a couple times before: at the schoolyard, when she was hanging out with her friends. He had watched her. By the way her mother was looking at him, it was clear he was not just some stalker.

When she reached a conclusion, he was disappearing inside a tall blue box. Dinky raced toward him.

"Dad!" she called. "Dad, wait!"

She came to a halt as the box faded in and out, making a strange noise. In a few seconds, it was gone.

Derpy approached her daugher and patted her on the back.

"It was him, wasn't it?" Dinky asked.

Her mother sighed. "It was, Dinky."

The filly sniffed. "Why didn't he stay?"

"He's needed elsewhere, but he does love you, Dinky." She wrapped her wing around her daughter. "Your daddy loves you."

Discord and Fluttershy decided to get away from the festivities and walked to an empty area of the park. Their time alone together was long overdue and the first thing they did was share a passionate kiss.

"I never should have doubted you," Discord said. "I should have known you would never betray me." He chuckled nervously. "I'm such a nutcase."

Fluttershy smiled. "It's alright. It's all in the past now." She glanced back at the party. "Are you alright with Screwball's coltfriend?"

"Well...he's not exactly what I had in mind, but...he did rescue both our children and...Screwy seems happy." He grunted. "Does he really have to move in with us though?"

"Now Discord, you know he can't return to the hive. He helped bring us back together. The least we can do is give him a place to stay."

"I've already given him my daughter! Next thing you know, he'll be asking for my throne! Why, if I could get my paw and claw around his neck..."

"Honey!" Fluttershy gasped.

He sighed. "You're right. You're right! He'll take good care of Screwy. It's just that..." He turned away. "I don't want to lose my little girl."

"Aw, Daddy!"

He looked up and saw Screwball hovering above him. She had been listening to the conversation. Not on purpose, for she and Mothball

were taking a stroll too.

Screwball floated down and hugged her father around his neck.

"I'll always be your little girl," she declared.

Discord smiled and wrapped his arms around the filly. No matter what would happen, no matter how big she would get, she would always be his daughter Screwball, and he would always be there for her.

For he was her Daddy Discord.

Wait, did you...? OMG you actually thought I was going to kill off Fluttershy?! What kind of writer do you take me for?!

Anyway, I'm going to take a break from multi-chapter fics, considering how long it took to write this one. But I might post a few one-shots in the meantime. I don't really know about writing a third story to this series.

Oh, right. Almost forgot.

And they all lived happily ever after!